# TELOS

Number 55 Spring 1983

## SPECIAL ISSUE ON FRENCH SOCIALISM

Articles:

COHEN: *The Problem of French Socialism*
LIPIETZ: *Which Social Forces are for Change?*
JULLIARD: *Mitterrand*
PORTELLI: *The French Socialist Party*
BONGIOVANNI: *The French Communist Party*
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## edited by Jean L. Cohen

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# INTRODUCTION

The French Socialist Party's victory in May 1981 was clearly a major political event. It posed, in the most concrete way, the question of the meaning of socialism in the 1980's, in a context where communism had already been completely discredited, the French Right was in disarray, and the whole world was in the midst of the most serious economic crisis since the Great Depression. It was a unique opportunity to show to what an extent democratic socialism could provide an alternative set of solutions and re-direct society towards more justice, equality, and a meaningful life for all. Has French socialism proven itself up to the task?

In the following special issue on that subject, conceived, organized and edited by Jean Cohen, the question is systematically investigated. In an exceptionally clear analysis, Alain Lipietz examines the economic and political situation to identify the major areas of dispute. The nature of the Socialist Party, the economic program, etc., are outlined with an eye on the future possibilities. Since the French political system places so much power in the President, it is crucial to understand this figure as the key to any developments. Thus, Jacques Julliard discusses Mitterrand's role and his general outlook (no pun intended). But in order to fully grasp the new state of affairs, it is necessary to contextualize it in the history of its political institutions — especially the parties and trade unions. Thus, Hughes Portelli, Bruno Bongiovanni, and Richard Shryock examine, respectively, the French Socialist Party, its communist counterpart, and the CFDT — the most important and interesting trade union in France.

Since it has now been two years since the Socialist Party's electoral victory, it is appropriate to examine what reforms have been carried out so far. Hence, Daniel Mothé, Thierry Paquot and Jacques Caroux discuss the status of democratization of the workplace, nationalization and decentralization. The results, however, are not so encouraging as one might have expected. In fact, the general evaluations of what has been accomplished up to now (by Mark Kesselman, Sharon Zukin, Moishe Gonzales and Gérard Raulet) are rather negative. What is most striking about the new socialist government is its continuity with earlier regimes. Even discussions of various aspects of the French political scene by leading French intellectuals such as Alain Touraine, Pierre Birnbaum, Claude Lefort, Pierre Rosanvallon and André Gorz do not provide much ground for optimism.

The most striking continuity, however, seems to be in foreign and military policy. Two interviews with Patrick Viveret, Pierre Hassner and Dominic Moisi (conducted by the Europe Information Radio Collective in New York City) spell out precisely the nature of the problems in this area. Other interviews with André Gorz and Michel Foucault focus on problems of French culture. On the whole, this issue should provide a fairly comprehensive evaluation of the nature and trajectory of French Socialism.

*Paul Piccone*

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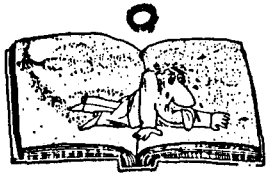

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# BEYOND "REFORM OR REVOLUTION"? THE PROBLEM OF FRENCH SOCIALISM

## by Jean L. Cohen

The victory of the French Socialist Party is an exceptional event. France is the first country in the West since the end of the sixties to have elected a Left government explicitly committed to a program of political, economic, social and cultural reform. The dramatic electoral success of the Socialist Party in May 1981[1] has placed it in an unprecedented position of power on the basis of the very institutions established by De Gaulle to block the Left: the Socialists control not only the government and the extraordinarily powerful presidency, but also the assembly in which they hold an absolute majority. The Socialist Party defeated an incumbent president of the Right, while simultaneously reducing the communist vote by nearly 5%, thus turning the PCF into a very junior partner in the Union of the Left. Given gloomy developments elsewhere, the presence of a genuinely reformist and extremely powerful political regime, ideologically attached to such standard socialist themes as political democratization, distributive justice, and social independence, is no small gain. No other Western political party or government is likely in the near future to be in a position to offer much more in terms of receptivity to institutional transformation or commitment to principle.

The meaning of this victory, however, and the significance of the fundamental reforms the PCF has initiated since coming to power are far from clear. This cannot be assessed unless one transcends the irrelevant opposition of "reform vs. revolution" usually applied to all political and social phenomena defined as socialist. Indeed, the very power position of a socialist government which has renounced the myth of total revolution and to which the path of social democracy is closed, provides a welcome occasion to reflect on the meaning of radical reform, democratization, social emancipation and socialism itself. Clearly, the two existing models erected on the basis of the unattractive alternative between reformist and revolutionary political strategy — social democracy and Bolshevism — are both in crisis and no longer compelling or meaningful in the present context.

Thus, it is essential for sympathetic intellectuals to avoid falling into the trap of either of the two attitudes corresponding to the reform/revolution dichotomy, namely, a) "we are in power": hence, it is necessary to uncritically support the socialist regime, stress its positive accomplishments, and explain away its failures in terms of the unfavorable economic, inter-

1. Jaffre demonstrates that the electoral success of the PSF was not simply the result of dislike of the Right, but the expression of a strong desire on the part of the population for thorough-going reforms — it was a vote *for* the Left. Cf. Jérôme Jaffré, "De Valéry Giscard d'Estaing à François Mitterrand: France de gauche, vote à gauche" in *Pouvoirs*, No. 20 (1982) pp. 5-28.



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national, and political environment; or, b) "socialism has been betrayed, coopted or used": thus, radicals must show how nothing has really changed, since capitalism and the bureaucratic state remain in force. The first approach might introduce clarity regarding structural and conjunctural constraints. It nonetheless abdicates the political responsibility of critical intellectuals to distance themselves from whatever government is in power and to act as the voice of society and social movements. The second approach may provide important critical perspectives. But appeals to an abstract purist stance forget that without a democratic political regime open to reform, social movements and radical thrusts from below do not stand a chance. It is thus of utmost importance to approach the French situation in terms of a different perspective. The issue at hand is no longer that of reform vs. revolution but rather the relation between reform, whatever the strategic goals of the reformers, and social movements. The focus should be on the tension and relation between reform from above, that tends on its own to degenerate into crisis management or rationalization strategies, and social movements from below that might contribute to the further demoralization of society, politics and economy. From this perspective, the socialist experience acquires an importance far beyond the French boundaries.

Important departures within post-Marxist thought in France have involved attempts to rethink both the concept of politics and the dynamics of civil society and social movements.[2] Many who have emerged from the self-critique of Marxism and the critique of totalitarianism without having abandoned their concern for radical change, have reinterpreted the socialist project in terms of the democratization of society. Two interconnected but distinct themes have emerged regarding this reinterpretation: one focusing on preserving the truth content of liberalism for a Left that has for too long been charmed by Jacobin/Marxist images of an undifferentiated political community, and the other stressing the democratizing potential of social movements. Lefort's, Abensour's, Furet's and Gauchet's concern with human rights, the concepts of the individual and politics, the non-Jacobin phase of the French Revolution, etc.,[3] are clearly related to the critique of "really existing socialism" and emphasize the importance of defending civil liberties, private spaces, individual dignity and autonomy against statist penetration. Although the defense of human rights is not a politics, it is the *sine qua non* for political and social action.

The focus on social movements rather than political revolution, the articulation of the theme of the self-institution of a democratic society (Castoriadis) or the defense of an autonomous and pluralist civil society (Touraine, Gorz), on the other hand, entail a reinterpretation of the meaning of socialism and democracy in terms of the creation of autonomous public

2. Cf. the work of Castoriadis, Lefort, Gorz, Touraine, Juilliard, Morin and others.

3. See the articles by Lefort and Abensour in the first issue of *Passé-Present*, (No. 1, 1982, Editions Ramsay) on the individual; François Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 1981) and Marcel Gauchet, "Les Droits de l'homme ne sont pas une politique" in *Le Debat* (No. 3 July-August 1980), pp. 3-21.

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spaces for action (in the classical sense). They point to a mode of being radical without being revolutionary, of struggling for the democratization of society, state, and economy without the dangerous myth of a total break with the past or the dissolution of state and economy into a transparent, defetishized, harmonious community. Accordingly, it becomes possible to rethink the relation between individual autonomy, social movements and reform.

These theoretical initiatives indirectly correspond to the ferment in French society since 1968 that gave rise to a broad spectrum of new social movements. Indeed, French society has been repeatedly animated by anti-authoritarian movements whose projects inform political culture and intellectual traditions. To be sure, many of those who resist stress libertarian themes at the expense of associative and political projects fostering the rebuilding of a pluralistic and active civil society. As Tocqueville noted long ago in his study of the French Revolution, anti-statist resistance in the name of individual rights, or libertarian movements rejecting the state altogether, can by no means be equated with the struggle for political freedom, or active participation in public life, decision-making and the articulation of goals and norms. There is, in effect, an affinity within the French tradition between anti-statist individualism (assertion of rights against hierarchial restrictive associations), slogans of popular sovereignity, defense of liberties against state arbitrariness on the one hand, and privatization leading back to dependency on the state, on the other. The discourse of rights and libertarian movements carry this danger if unaccompanied by a project to extend the associative dimension of the intermediary sphere between private and state sectors and to endow it with public, political power.

In this regard, the most important practical development is the complex innovative unionism of the C.F.D.T.[4] which explicitly links themes of voluntary association, autogestion, and social independence. By insisting on the importance of "la voie contractuelle," the C.F.D.T. challenges the productivist étatist model cum ouvrierism that has hitherto haunted Marxism. The fact that the C.F.D.T. demonstrated an immediate solidarity with *Polish Solidarity*, that it has maintained a supportive yet critical relation to the Socialist government, indicates the presence of democratically-oriented elements of non-identity in French society.

Nevertheless, there is a certain irony in the present situation. Before coming to power, the Socialist Party took up issues and themes first raised in May 1968 and articulated throughout the 70's by actors other than the industrial working class, serving, in part, as a voice of and for society and social movements. As Juilliard points out,[5] the socialists were the party not of the poor, nor even of the traditional industrial working class, but of the active. The themes raised by various social movements such as the democratization of communication media (radio-libre movement), women's emancipation, regional and local demands for autonomy, ecological critiques of nuclear

4. See Shryock's article in this issue of *Telos*.
5. See his article in this issue of *Telos*.

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energy, demands for alternative models of development distinct from productivism, and autogestion, all found echoes in the Socialist Party prior to 1981. However, the change in function of this party from an opposition force open to initiatives from below to that of governing party has been accompanied by a corresponding change in emphasis.

On the one hand, the Socialist government has produced an enormous amount of reform legislation since coming to power. As Touraine, Birnbaum and others point out,[6] many of the electoral promises have been kept. But *the way* in which they have been kept, namely through "legalization" and the creation of government posts for former movement leaders, seems to thwart rather than reinforce action on the part of social forces. In Paris alone, 17 "free" radio stations have been legalized, a new ministry of women's rights has been established, claims of regionalist movements have found resonance in the decentralization reform, an agency for energy control has been created to address ecological issues (although nuclear energy and arms production continues), and the Auroux reform guaranteeing union bargaining rights and worker representation in enterprise councils have spoken to some of the claims made by workers' organizations.

The problem with these reforms is not that they are not radical enough, but rather that they occur, as all political reforms must, through legislation and perforce carry the danger of a further administrative penetration of social life. When combined with Prime Minister Mauroy's arguments to the effect that, insofar as "your" government has kept its promises, actors must support the regime, refrain from challenges and behave as social partners, the danger of statist/technocratic manipulation is strengthened. In the face of the undeniable legitimacy of the Left government, or at least the presidency, and the unattractive political alternative of a return of the Right, both of which are continually flaunted by the Socialist Party, and coupled with appeals to defend an embattled socialist state threatened economically and politically, society tends to lose its voice and its power to generate initiatives and alternative projects. When a Socialist Party sees its main task as explaining the projects of the government to the population, discontent can find expression only in corporatistic interest claims.[7] Far from fostering solidarity, the denial of legitimacy to contestatory social movements contributes to the double dynamic of privatization, apathy and strident interest claims addressed to an increasingly overburdened yet powerful interventionist state machinery. In short, a vicious circle ensues debilitating social actors and fostering étatism despite the intentions behind reforms that may seek just the opposite result.

This dynamic is evident in the tension between initiatives toward democratization that would free society from state tutelage, creating spaces for autonomous action, and crisis-management strategies geared toward political rationalization and economic performance. Even the most promising

6. See their articles in this issue of *Telos*.
7. See Rosanvallon's article in this issue of *Telos*.

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institutional reforms are only the necessary and not the sufficient condition for democratization. Hence, the ambiguity surrounding the decentralization law that shifts centralized bureaucratic decision-making (prefectural system) to locally and regionally elected bodies, and the Auroux laws guaranteeing for the first time bargaining rights to unions on the enterprise level and worker representation in enterprise councils.[8] To some, these appear as mere rationalizing measures continuous with Gaullist objectives, that bring France on a par (but no further) with other advanced capitalist welfare systems. Considered from the standpoint of crisis management, the decentralization reform frees the state from administrative burdens by distributing responsibilities to local bodies thereby shielding the center from excess demands; the Auroux reforms at last institutionalize, and potentially diffuse and depoliticize, labor conflicts.[9] On the other hand, when considered with the nationalization of credit and of large parts of the oligopoly sector (for the first time major profitable industries have been nationalized on a massive scale in the West), the discontinuities of the reform measures both with the Gaullist/Giscardian past and with social democratic practice elsewhere becomes evident. Thus, they initiate a *new* form of mixed economy to be run by a technocratic and modern version of the Colbertist state.[10] Finally, one might assess these reforms in conjunction with the various "republican" measures (abolition of the death penalty, granting of civil rights to immigrants, abolition of the Cour de Sureté, reform of the penal system), and argue that they are indeed democratizing measures insofar as they establish a terrain on which social groups might coalesce and social discussion of institutional arrangements might occur. In short, one cannot decide on the basis of the content of the reforms themselves, whether they imply continuity with the statist tradition of the past, an original version of technocracy *cum* social passivity, or the chance for the emergence of an entirely new range of associations, challenges and debates. This will depend on the capacity of social actors to generate new organizations, check the decline of unionism,[11] and partake in democratic social movements.

The lack of receptivity on the part of the government to the few initiatives from below that have occurred since May 1981 such as worker take-overs of bankrupt enterprises, strikes, and ecologist activity against nuclear installations, is hardly a good sign. Mitterrand has not hesitated to use the extensive powers of the executive to make decree laws, to pass programs over the objections of the party in parliament (the nuclear program), to abolish existing associations deemed dangerous to the state,[12] and to maintain the system of

8. See Caroux's and Mothé's articles in this issue of *Telos*.

9. See Kesselman's article in this issue of *Telos*.

10. See Touraine's article in this issue of *Telos*.

11. Less than 20% of French workers are unionized. The Left victory has not stopped the decline in unionization occurring during the last five years. Cf. Hubert Landier, *Demain, quels syndicats?* (Pluriel, Librairie Generale Francaise, 1981).

12. In the summer of 1982, the Mitterand government officially abolished the *Service d'action civique* (S.A.C.), a right wing organization suspected of terrorism. A long debate ensued in *Libéra-*

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identity cards over the objections of the Minister of Justice. This reveals the ease with which the Socialist regime adapts to the statist tradition despite its claims to the contrary. Far from fostering an atmosphere favorable to debate and autonomous action, such political measures reproduce the already strong social fragmentation and corporatist orientation of the social actors, the so-called "social partners."

Given the ambiguities of the situation, it should come as no surprise that the PS as the party in power has entered into a profound identity crisis — one which concerns not only its own ideology, but that of the Left as a whole. This crisis was only temporarily masked by the electoral success, the ensuing euphoria of the festivities at the Bastille on May 10, and the state of grace granted to the regime during the first year of office. Despite Mitterand's brilliant electoral strategy that appealed to the new social strata produced by twenty years of Gaullist/Giscardian modernization, despite the desire of Chevènement, Rocard, and their supporters to be "absolutely modern," the Socialist Party has failed to forge a meaningful collective identity adequate to the forces it mobilized or to the society it wishes to govern. The party in power is unable to generate even the fiction of a general political will, or to avoid the deactivization and demobilization of those who formerly supported it. To anyone who had bothered to look at the party program, the absence of a coherent ideology was evident before the election. Written by Chevènement, the program is a mélange of Marxist slogans and populist appeals to every conceivable constituency excluding large capital. Small wonder that in the absence of a coherent identity, the Socialist Party has reverted to the tired political culture and methods of the old Left: appeals to the symbolic repertoire of the French Revolution, emphasis on economic productivist rationality, promises of a return to economic growth, and a voluntarist attitude that offers planned investment in high technology as the solution to all problems.

At a time when even a Left-leaning social democratic alternative is no longer viable, when intellectuals and potential social actors ought to be elaborating theoretical frameworks to articulate new needs and projects, appeals to an archaic and increasingly incoherent socialist ideology and reliance on state institutions can only highlight the identity crisis of socialism, French or any other. Indeed, the ideological failure of the Socialist Party is of far greater import than the success of the party in occupying the commanding heights of the state, or short term pragmatic gains or errors in economic management. For it is indicative of a general ideological dead end of much of the socialist political tradition. It is clear to many observers of French intellectual and political life,[13] that the victory of the Left is in a certain sense pyrrhic: the Socialist Party rose to power just when intellectuals in France (and elsewhere) had abandoned Marxism, when socialism could no longer be seen as the unambiguous

*tion* and elsewhere regarding the threat to civil liberties by the government action which used decree measures to abolish the independent association. The government in France has the right to abolish associations, all of which in turn require official permission for their existence.

13. See the articles by Raulet, Lefort, and Juilliard in this issue of *Telos*.

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solution to political or social problems, and when the precondition for the social democratic version of reform *cum* distributive justice, namely growth, is no longer available. After the first flurry of demand-stimulating neo-Keynesian policies ended in crisis and austerity in June 1982, it became obvious that the substitution of social-economic concessions for an open political debate and more daring initiatives (such as fiscal reform or reduction of the workweek tied to job sharing) will not work.

Instead of using the crisis to further democratize economic or political institutions, to initiate the public debate that is necessary to generate the solidarity that the regime so badly needs, it appears that the choice will be to hold back on reform and to engage in standard crisis-management strategies associated with austerity programs. If such "realism" from above is matched by "realism" from below (concern for self-interest), if ideology and utopia are abandoned, then the political and social project of radical reform predicated upon new forms of participation and consensus will be sacrificed along with the "third way" toward a more flexible model of development and democracy. It is hard to imagine how rigor and austerity in such a context could avoid authoritarianism either on the part of the socialist government in power or through its defeat.

On the other hand, the recent tendency of Mitterrand and his new ministers to abandon the tired socialist rhetoric of the past, the recognition of limits set by the undeniable economic crisis, and the neutralization of the Communist Party present a unique opportunity for radical intellectuals in France to raise at last the fundamental political questions — what is socialism, what kind of society and economy do we have (certainly not socialist) and what kind of society do we want? If socialism is not a type of state, if it is not simply a mode of economic organization, then what is it? The socialist experiment in France does not provide answers, but rather leads to roughly the following set of questions.

1. *What does/should society expect from its state?* This question has two sides. First, it refers to the goals of the various social actors in France — what has happened to the "new social movements" since May 1981 and what are the projects that might be articulated if they resurface? The second side refers to the meaning of a "socialist state" — is this a contradiction in terms? What are structural and institutional reforms expected to accomplish? How can the creation of new social rights foster the active formation of autonomous associations and movements in society rather than increasing the administrative penetration of the latter by the state? What happens to the best of reformist intentions in the absence of pressure from below?

2. *Does the state now have its own project?* Here again, two themes are central: how is the state changed under socialist control and what is the legitimate relation between the majority party and the state it controls? Can a political party in power represent the claims and projects of society or is it forced to become a transmission belt, explaining the decisions of the state to a passive populace? More specifically as regards France, what is the internal political environment

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in which the Socialist Party functions and to which culture of the Left does it really belong?

3. *How does its external environment affect the socialist regime?* Clearly, the state does not only have society as its "environment." Other states, as well as a world economic order, constitute an external environment that cannot be abstracted away from, but which can be responded to and influenced. What are the forces pushing the government to abandon projects of social and political democratization in favor of crisis management and austerity? Is there anything that deeply distinguishes the Socialist international economic and military-diplomatic posture from Gaullism?

4. *What is the current status of French political and social theory and how might it inform emancipatory social movements?* This question in particular is addressed by this special issue on France, whose aim is not only to make *visible* the political and social questions smothered by the obsession with the economic crisis on the part of both the state and beleagured individuals. Even more important, it brings together a series of theoretical and political interventions on the part of critical intellectuals which provide for the moment the best hope that a socialist civil society is still conceivable and perhaps even possible in France and elsewhere. But theory — no more than the state — should not attempt to impose a full-blown conception of an emancipated society on quiescent movements and de-activized social actors. The future meanings of socialism and democracy must ultimately emerge from below.


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# WHICH SOCIAL FORCES ARE FOR CHANGE?*

## by Alain Lipietz

Do you remember the debate about the two cultures on the Left? It was the big hit of the "dark years," from 1978-1980. On my Left (?), the valiant defenders of Marxism and the exploited, enemies of the "consensus" and "neo-social-democracy" and the "neo-petty-bourgeoisie," nostalgic defenders of the State and of "progress-all-the-same." On my Right (?), the deplorers of Statism and productivism, the champions of autonomy and the New Social Movements. CERES vs. the Rocardians, *Non!* vs. *Faire*, Motchane vs. Touraine, Jacobin culture vs. self-management culture.

Today the Left is in power. Which "culture" does it defend? To find out, you need only read the Plan, the first doctrinal statement of the new presidency. Right in the introduction, which sums up the legacy of the previous administration ("A Conservative Policy: Acknowledging a Blocked Situation"), we read: "This situation [inherited from Giscardianism] both reflects and reinforces the unfavorable attitude toward technical culture in our country....[The many transformations France has undergone in the past 30 years] have created conditions for a cultural metamorphosis whose first consequences are already in effect. A new culture, worldwide in its sphere of dissemination, is developing, based on knowledge and the contributions of science and technology; it calls forth means of acquiring and using knowledge; criteria for evaluating facts, events and works which have not yet been incorporated into our educational system. This culture is no longer knowledge, possession or usufruct of a legacy, be it collective or personal. It is more the ability for firms, groups and individuals to adapt and create, allowing them to place themselves, and to progress, within a permanent flow of information, knowledge and works from all horizons. All societies which have reached this stage of development must adapt their system of education and training, their structures of information, and even the image of their culture, to these new conditions. The absence or inadequacy of basic technical education at all levels and in all areas of schooling has deeply negative effects; among the most evident are underemployment; poorly adapted or obsolescent theoretical knowledge in all sectors of professional life; ignorance or lack of interest in industrial activities....In the field of education, information and culture, the broadening of supply has not generated the effects that one might have expected, such as an accentuation of social mobility, extension of the role of opinion, the development of creation. This unfinished transformation has led today to a turning backwards toward the past. This, in the long run, is the most serious threat weighing on French society."

* Originally published in *Les Temps Modernes*, May 1982. Translated by Jim Cohen.



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That ought to be clear enough. The culture which must be defended is one which (finally) adapts the ideology of France to what France has actually become in 30 years — from the Langevin-Wallon report to the Rueff-Armand report: "absolutely modern" as *Libération* editor Serge July would say, that is, technical and entrepreneurial.

But in what follows, we are told to beware: "In order to confront the crisis, France must search for new paths to recovery and progress. The failure of the previous administration demonstrates that a policy which allows the hopes of young people, the aspirations of women, and the employment security of older workers to be sacrificed is fundamentally contrary to the interests and expectations of the Nation. Social organization itself must undergo a renovation. The preceeding governments were blind to the demand for justice and progress. They followed a liberal [i.e., 'free enterprise'] and conservative policy. They failed to establish economic order. They allowed attitudes of withdrawal to develop. They let social divisions become intensified. France must turn its back on the forms of segregation which such policies encouraged. There can be no delay in bridging the gap between those who enjoy comfort, stable and easily attainable employment and a guaranteed future, and those who must suffer the risks and failures of modernization, pushed toward uncertain perspectives and precarious situations, or an assisted and dependent existence. The causes of this dangerous evolution must be eliminated, for they create — beneath the appearances of political democracy — an unacceptable cleavage between active and passive citizens." In other words, no modernity without solidarity. As stated in the paragraph on labor-management negotiation: "It is a matter of equity. It is becoming an imperative for efficiency."

In summary: the culture proposed by the Plan, drafted under the aegis of Rocardians, but carefully surveyed by other tendencies of the majority party, sees itself as modern, i.e., technical and industrial; considers this as merely a process of adapting to socio-economic reality, just as "the political majority has rejoined the sociological majority;" encourages the "interface" of dynamic individuals and groups; and refuses the "dual society," seeking to assure the social dissemination of progress. In short, the new culture is *Rocardo-CERESiste*.

So? Could it be that three years of debate about "archaic" thinking on the Left masked a deeper agreement on basic issues? Is this accord the product of a viable "hegemonic bloc" in the Gramscian sense of the term? That is what needs to be examined.

*The Great Transformation*

There is no need to dwell here on the formidable transformation France underwent in the post-World-War period.[1] At the end of the war, agriculture still represented 45% of the working population. The French hegemonic

1. See, e.g., the works of André Granou, or my own: "Derriére les programmes, voir les forces" in *Les Temps Modernes*, December, 1976; "La double complexité de la crise," June, 1980.

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system, since the "holy alliance" against the nobility in 1789, renewed in June, 1848 and in Spring of 1971 against the proletariat, has fueled itself on the notion of Property, thus welding all the "small independent property holders," formers and "industrial and commercial entrepreneurs" to the *grande bourgeoisie*. The postwar period was characterized by the collapse of the peasantry, artisans and small shopkeepers (who have fallen from 31% to 14% from 1954 to 1978), while new layers of wage workers are on the rise. This phenomenon may be explained by three mechanisms:[2] 1) The concentration of capitalist production, accompanied by the "deconcentration" of capitalist functions, favoring the rise of wage-earning executives. While the exodus from the countryside has provided a growing mass of employees, and the growth of commercial employees has compensated for the fall of small traders, the growth of "liberal professions and upper executives" (the so-called "*bourgeois salariés*") is more than matched by the collapse of the "industrial and commercial entrepreneur" category. 2) The capitalist division of labor, as it de-skills industrial work, causes a swelling in the ranks of technicians and engineers. Yet, this group remains limited: the former rise from 1% to 3.5% during the period from 1954 to 1975 while the latter moved from 0.4% to 1.2%. And 3) The rapid growth in the tasks of social regulation undertaken by the wage-earners of the public or para-public sector. In fact, professors, schoolteachers and so-called "middle-level medical and social managers" are the only groups which "explode" at annual rhythms of 8% after 1968, reaching 6.5% of the active population in 1975.

Thus while the mass of industrial workers has remained relatively stable (from 34% to 38% between 1954 and 1975) along with the handful of industrial entrepreneurs and liberal professionals (1% in 1954 as in 1975), we have witnessed a remarkable "substitution" of middle classes.

In the same period of time, the industrial working class itself has gone through considerable internal changes. Formerly structured according to a "skilled vs. manual labor" model, concentrated in the "Red belt" districts, organized by the Communist Party and the *Confédération Générale du Travail* (CGT), it has undergone a deep polarization of its technical composition, favoring the emergence of de-skilled "specialized" workers on one side and technicians on the other, with a transformation in its base of recruitment — more women, more rural people, more immigrants — which is not without consequences at the regional level. For example, in the rural townships of Lower Normandy, the majority of inhabitants are now wage workers.

Behind all this commotion: the "30 glorious years" (in J. Fourastié's words) of intensive capital accumulation. Gone were the days of the timid, protectionist capitalism of the Third Republic. France opened up to Taylorism, "Fordism" and international competition. The spearhead of this industrialization effort was the industrial equipment sector, of which the Automobile was the finest blossom. This is the sector which pushes to an

2: See my "Le tertiaire, arborescence de l'accumulation capitaliste" in *Critiques de l'Economie Politique*, No. 12, July-September, 1980.

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extreme the dissociation of collective know-how, polarized between "specialized laborers" (reduced to a role of manual execution) and methods bureaus. The development of this Fordism over a long period was possible only because it centered on mass production for mass consumption, which in turn implied the swelling of public service categories, i.e., the managers of the Welfare State.[3]

But which social group became the protagonist of this model of development? Not the old industrial and banking bourgeoisie, which had been crying out, only 10-20 years earlier: "We'd rather have Hitler than the Popular Front." No, instead we have a strange bloc of Gaullists, Marxists and Left Christians operating within the economic administration, and whose epic story has been told by Fourquet.[4] These future high functionaries, humiliated by the 1940 defeat, exasperated by a retrograde bourgeoisie, made up the only truly significant secret, underground party (in the Machiavellian sense of the term) of the 1950's and 60's: This party held state power only exceptionally (under Mendés-France and Chaban-Delmas), but in the bureaus of the upper administration, the Ministries of Finance, Planning, and the Department of Territorial Development (DATAR), it pursued its project with perseverance. The "Party of development"....Its very success within a fraction of the industrial bourgeoisie — a success which Gaullism was to assure at the level of economic policy — undermined the ideological base of the Right's hegemony. It may be said that Jérôme Monod, the party's faithful servant in DATAR, through his policy of de-skilling industrialization in the West of France, provided the fall of Jérôme Monod, Gaullist politician, in that Catholic region which had rallied to the Left by the municipal elections of 1976, helping to assure the overwhelming legislative victory of the Socialist Party in June, 1981.

What did the Right have to offer, after all? Once again, as always, the myth of property and the fear of "the sharers" ("*les partageux*"). After the cultural clash of May 1968, Premier Chaban-Delmas tried playing the "New Society" card, which he withdrew quickly when it failed to extinguish protest and calm workers' struggles, while provoking a defensive reflex on the part of the Right's chieftains: you can't win elections against those who are putting up your campaign posters. Pompidou took the risk of launching the "enrich yourself" theme, evoking the growth of durable consumer goods; but at the decisive moment, there was a return to the archaic strain of "They're going to take your little houses away" (this commodity being diametrically opposed to the logic of Fordism). One need only recall the windy oratory of Premier Pierre Messmer and the appeal to sacred old values by Culture Minister Maurice Druon.

3. On Fordism as work-process and mode of consumption, and the "monopolistic regulation" which accompanies it, see the works of Aglietta, Boyer, Coriat, Granou, and my book *Crise et inflation, pourquoi?* (Ed. Maspéro, 1979).

4. F. Fourquet, *Les Comptes de la puissance: histoire du Plan et de la comptabilité nationale*, (Editions Encres, 1981). As a complementary source, see P. Massé, "Autocritique des années 60, vues par un Commissaire au Plan" in *Supplément au Bulletin de l'IHTP*, No. 1, 1981.

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Yes, there was an industrial bourgeoisie in this period which was ready to play the card of the "Nippo-Swedish model:" the bourgeoisie which favored expansion (and read *Expansion* magazine), an industrial bourgeoisie which flirted with a certain modernist Left (J. Bidegain and C. Neuschwander, for example), and which felt oppressed by the archaism of the later Pompidou period. This bourgeoisie encountered that Left in associations such as *Echange et Projet*, under the aegis of "developmentalists" who were upset by the political failure of Chaban; some of the latter (such as Delors and Pisani) were to take the leap of joining the Socialist Party.

*The Giscardian Break*

At Pompidou's death in 1974, the Socialist Party was thus all ready to receive its legitimate legacy. With the industrialization process and the rural exodus largely completed, and the great wave of May 1968 having broken, and being well along the path to social-democratic co-optation, France seemed on the verge of aligning itself politically with Northern Europe, having already done so economically. And, indeed, by the legislative elections of 1973, the Left, with its Common Program, was knocking on the door of state power. It missed taking power by a hair in the presidential race of 1973. But miss it did, and the receding wave tossed up the foam of Giscardian "advanced liberalism." Seven years of Giscard's presidency and economic crisis were quite enough to squander the legacy promised to the social-democracy *á la française*.

Indeed, in 1974, in the heart of this specifically French hegemonic crisis, and at the beginning of the world crisis of Fordism, the financial bourgeoisie — i.e., the group which is free to place its money in rents, Russian loans, colonies or national industry — just barely held the line against the Left and delegated its power to its direct representative: Valéry Giscard d'Estaing.

We have here a double break with tradition. First, the financial bourgeoisie rarely occupies political power in its pure state. The summits of the state are generally occupied by the representatives of a class *alliance*, or hegemonic bloc, and not a basic class, even if it is an hegemonic *position*.[5] In fact, this can only happen in situations wherein the hegemonic bloc is already worn thin, while the new bloc is not yet mature or accepted, and in which there is no apparent "Bonapartist" solution.[6] This was the case with *Orléanisme* and with the Republic of the Dukes. The disadvantage of this last-recourse solution is that a class so microscopic cannot hold power alone for very long. We saw this in 1980-81 just as in 1848.

5. More generally, just as in chemistry one deals with molecules and not atoms, in political struggle one observes not classes but systems of class alliances (or blocs); a single class or class fraction may belong to two conflicting blocs, because of diverse linkages and attitudes that certain class fractions may present as a consequence of the complexity of their concrete conditions of existence and the manner in which they perceive these.

6. Correlatively to note 5, Bonapartism should not be conceived as an autonomization of political power in a situation of equilibrium between two classes, but rather in a situation of mutation between two hegemonic blocs. In this sense, Gaullism was Bonapartism.

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The second break with tradition: Giscard d'Estaing did not belong to the "Resistentialist" Arc; he could only claim to lead a very tiny group, the Independent Republicans, which was the product of a split from the old party of the traditional Right, the *Centre National des Indépendents et Paysans* (CNIP). This small contraption, (whose main claim to fame will have been that for 10 years running, from 1968-1978, it provided the Right with its Ministers of the Interior, or "top cop"), along with vestiges of the post-war Christian-Democratic M.R.P., made up the Union for French Democracy (UDF), Giscard's presidential coalition.

Giscard, although trained in the entourage of the economic adminsitration and familiar with the credo of the developmentalists, did not share their beliefs. His Orleanist and "Vichyist" character[7] were not long in coming to the surface. In *Les Comptes de la puissance*, despite the brief presented by his advocate, Jean Sérisé, Giscard appears in the role of traitor. Let us recall, just to be clear, that the result of the 1974 election was not decided in the protected atmosphere of a seminar of the financial bourgeoisie meeting in a castle in the Yvelines. If Giscard beat Chaban-Delmas in the first round of the presidential elections and contained Mitterrand in the second, it was because, in spite of everything, he enjoyed a certain modernist image ("Change without risk") which he managed to retain for several months.

Let us pass over the brief episode of Jacques Chirac's Premiership (1974-1976) and the defeat of the Left in the legislative elections of 1978[8] so as to move directly to the government led by Raymond Barre, which expressed the president's true nature. Four years of Barrism brought about a complete transformation of the economic-political philosophy of the grande bourgeoisie. In confronting the crisis, the upper bourgeoisie (financial and industrial) and the upper administration made a choice which was to weigh heavily in the legacy transmitted to Mitterrand's presidency.[9] They abandoned the dream of a well-controlled, nationally-centered development of the French economic apparatus, opting instead for a new strategy of international free-market liberalism. Good-bye to the logic of decision between French investment and French consumption. France committed itself to what Stoffaës called a "dual society" path:[10] a mass of unemployed or insecure workers and small and middle-sized sub-contracting firms become pawns to a modern competitive sector moving toward multinationalization. The combined policy of the underevalued franc (which dissolved the territorial industrial base in favor of investment abroad) and austerity (which allowed for

7. The similarities between Giscardianism and Vichyism, often pointed out, are mentioned here only to stress that a certain technocratic modernism (see Paxton's book on Vichy) can very well fit in with a reactionary civil and political legislation, an abandonment of national independence, a relation to the masses based on elitism and paternalism, etc. From this standpoint, and thus via *certain* aspects of developmentalism, there is a continuity within the Vichyite modernist Right from De Gaulle to Giscard, despite the reversals explained here.

8. See my "La double complexite" *op. cit.*

9. This diagnosis is based on a serious economic study, summed up in my article "Redéploiement industriel: le legs du libéralisme," in *Le Débat* No. 16, November, 1981.

10. See C. Stoffaës and J. Amado, "Vers une socio-économie duale?" Francaise, 1980.

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competition on the world market rather than competition by quality) reflected this option. The results were not long in coming: the internationalization of the French productive apparatus, already well along the way under Pompidou's presidency, was brutally accelerated. France quickly lost control over the production of its own means of production: more than 50% of its machines were purchased abroad, and the machine-tool sector was nearly annihilated. As a result, any succeeding government, whatever its political color, was condemned to subordinate its social policy to external constraints.

This collapse of the economic basis for a modernist social-democratic compromise was accompanied by another, relatively independent development: the erosion of this policy's ideological prestige. The (very relative) decline of the myth of the Welfare State is due to internal causes within the Left itself — a fusion of the Maoist and free-enterprise critiques of Soviet social-fascism, along with a questioning of statism and productivism by the social movements influenced by May 1968, etc. The equation "technical progress equals economic progress equals social progress equals the program of the state," shared by the Left of the 50's and 60's and the developmentalist party, has flown to pieces. Talented ideologues, situated along a wide spectrum from Raymond Aron to *Libération* and centered in the review *Esprit*, are attempting to forge a new synthesis between the needs of the modernization of free-enterprise capitalism and the libertarian aspirations which have been fermenting in the depths of society.

To be sure, this ideology was never to become that of Giscardian government, and even less that of a Giscard-Rocard alliance. It might have happened, but it did not — somewhat like in 1914, when the center-right and the center-left were irremediably split over the question of religion. And yet it seemed so simple. All you had to do was offer the masses a bit of participation in "quality-of-life" decisions in exchange for austerity at the quantitative level. All you had to do was farm out the management of local affairs to the new service-based petty-bourgeoisie while the grande bourgeoisie reserved for itself the worldwide domain in the Trilateral framework — with the national state, that barbaric relic, falling through the trap-door. I myself had outlined this hypothesis, which the review of the CERES, *Non!*, and in particular J.P. Garnier, were to present as an already-accomplished model.[11] But it was not to be. There was a reason of a general order for this: there is no other institution of sovereignty than the national state. Even if the hegemonic system can be modulated on differentiated regional frameworks, and even if the world-economy is structured according to "camps of nations" which guarantee a world order and struggle to impose it, the class struggle still plays itself out, and the institutional compromises are still negotiated at the nation-state level.

11. This interpretation is "paranoid" in the sense that it boils down to interpreting "everything that moves" outside the traditional workers' movement as a plot by the Trilateral Commission. I attempted to react against this interpretation while acknowledging certain truthful aspects of it in two articles which complement "La double complexité...:" "L'Absurde polarisatioon" in *Le Monde diplomatique,* November 1980 and "Choisir sa gauche" in *Le Débat* No. 9, 1981.

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Next, there is a reason of a particular order: during a period of redeployment, the local level cannot be uncoupled from the global level. The struggles in the Lorraine, at Plogoff, the sectoral workers' and farmers' struggles collided head-on with the logic of redeployment and called forth the state's repressive intervention. Under these conditions, the social movements could not be counted on to reform the existing institutional order without questioning its structural stability: the "social" was nothing more than a loose heap of corporatisms which paralyzed the free-enterprise liberalism of the economy, and which the state had to put down. The situation was one in which the economic logic of a limited group, the multinational (*mondialiste*) bourgeoisie had nothing, but nothing, to propose to other layers of society.

The Giscard-Barre duo launched into the heresy (for all schools of political science theory combined) of governing a state in the literally corporate interests of a single class fraction, without conceding anything, even verbally, to its network of allies and supporters. The year 1980 saw this heresy become a paradox: the government united against itself — teachers, judges, lawyers, executives, fishermen, small traders, farmers, employees, workers — in short, everyone, from exploited classes to subordinate agents of domination. One still wonders how it was possible to believe, in the fall of that year, that Giscard would win the elections.[12] Indeed, the only ideology which remained for the regime to adopt was that of Law and Order, i.e., the scarecrow of insecurity. Only fascist regimes can consolidate themselves with such an appeal, and the "soft Vichyism" of Giscard was not fascism. For one thing, the social material of fascism, including a serious working-class challenge to state power, did not exist. As for the ultra-modernist appeal to the trade-winds of international competition, mobility, *mondialisme*, etc., this ideology for rising young wolves could appeal only to a limited group (business executives and the upper state administration, by now purged of its nationalist developmentalists).

The sociologists of the HAVAS publicity agency (who are to class analysis what landscape painters are to geology) had in fact detected the coming collapse of this "look," which had replaced the rural "look" during the 1960-1974 period, and the rapid emergence of the "re-centered" group. The world crisis of Fordism had nothing to offer but blood, sweat and tears. The new petty bourgeoisie wanted to breathe a little. Perhaps not even Rocard would have made a successful presidential candidate.

*Has the Ship of Social-Democracy at Last Arrived?*

Mitterrand won a handy victory. Just as a tectonic pressure which has been contained too long unleashes an earthquake once a certain degree of tension is reached, the breach opened in the presidential legitimacy of the Right in May, 1981 had, by June, turned into a Socialist Party landslide in the

12. In that gloomy era, José Staco asked, in issue No. 25 of *Partis pris*: How is it possible to continue to lead in the opinion polls while attacking all the categories of society at once? He did not hazard an answer. In No. 22 (September, 1980), I compared the situation to the *ancien régime* just "before the flood," while nonetheless taking seriously the polls favorable to Giscard d'Estaing.

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parliamentary elections. At last, the French people dared to wish for the change for which they were ripe.[13] And yet....can it really be said that it is never too late to do good?

In the opposition, the Socialist Party had stored up all the aspirations of the new service layers as well as those of the workers. The Communist Party, embodying a traditional working class whose ranks were eroded by the capitalist reorganization of labor, having vainly tried to win away these new layers, retreated to its sociological bastion, at the risk of reproducing the worst faults attributed to this constituency: reference to the social-fascist countries, strains of *Doriotiste* rhetoric against the immigrants, and even crimes against the unity of the class, as attested by the racist incidents of Vitry and Montigny. This tactic was a failure, and the latent erosion of the party's electoral strength changed overnight into an historical débâcle. As for the Right, which was holding on by sheer inertia, it had strictly nothing left to say (Jacques Chirac having prudently hidden away the Reaganism which he had borrowed for the campaign, but whose fortunes in America were rapidly turning it into an anti-model).

The path was thus free. Better still, all routes appeared open. Mitterrand, a prudent and clever politican, took care to occupy all the spaces of representation: that of the new social layers (as attested by the "Other Path" poster in which he is shown flanked by waxen-faced experts — no fools, they!) and that of Old France (as is seen in the quasi-*Pétainiste* poster set against the background of a Roman church, with a slogan "Calm Strength"). It was thus admissible to seek support from the new layers, but only insofar as they wished to rediscover their roots, to "re-center" themselves. Because, in any event, the marginals who would have been willing to vote for the comic showman Coluche had no choice but to vote Mitterrand. They were granted a rock concert at Place de la République and the "peace of the brave" in the Larzac and Plogoff struggles.

Mitterrand's victory is thus the return to the necessity of a national-popular cultural hegemony, which the post-victory ceremony at the Panthéon rooted in a socialist, "Resistentialist" and anticolonialist humanism. Victor Hugo, whom Giscard had assassinated by sending the Royal Army against the fishermen, was brought back to life. Aside from which, Mitterrand writes like an heir to French high culture, whereas Giscard writes like an overeager polythechnic student.

Mitterrand's victory was thus a purging of the anti-liberty aberrations so foreign to the great tradition of the French Revolution, and which Pompidouism and Giscardism had allowed to accumulate. The death penalty was abolished, along with the State Security Court, the so-called "Security and Liberty" Law, and the military tribunals; gestures were made to the immigrants, the refugees, etc.

But Mitterrand's victory was above all the forceful return of the develop-

13. As J. Jaffré shows, it was not merely a demobilization of the electorate of the Right — see "France de gauche, vote de gauche" *Pauvoirs*, No. 20, 1982.

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mentalists, who had been marginalized by Giscard d'Estaing. Symbolically enough, on the very day when Giscard attended the Circus of the Porte de Pantin with actors Mireille Mathieu and Alain Delon, the candidate Mitterrand retired for a studious Sunday with the remnants of the great era of the Plan and National Accounts, under the auspices of Pierre Mendès-France.

And in fact, contrary to all expectations, the new government gave birth, without delay, to a law nationalizing several of the main industrial and financial groups in their entirety and a "Keynesian" budget aiming at stimulating the economy through deficit public finance, with state expenditure being dedicated to a rise in social transfer payments and a great leap forward in research and development.

If we add to this picture that the very first major reform of the presidency was the decentralization law which endows local communities with an executive power — for the first time since Bonaparte did away with the communalist spirit of the 1793 constitution — then we see a certain logic in bud. Rigorously expounded in the Interim Plan, this logic may be summed up as follows: 1) Return, under state guidance, to a national-centered Fordism, with gains in productivity being shared out, this time, between accumulation and the shortening of the work-week. And 2) Re-adapting the institutional framework so as to promote the broad access of new middle layers to the management of local affairs, thus giving material substance at last to a modernist hegemonic bloc.

Is this not, after all, purely and simply the materialization of what might have occurred as early as 1973 — in short, what Chaban wished to do — in an economic conjuncture which is certainly less rosy than before, but also, politically far freer of obstacles? That is, there are no more ultra-leftists (*gauchistes*) to worry about, while the working-class aristocracy and bureaucracy represented by the Communist Party are forced to dilute their ambitions. Is this not the suitable synthesis between the "two cultures" of the Left on the common ground of modernism? For Chevènement and the industrialists, the Jacobin control over economic and technological development; and for the Rocardians, decentralization and the so-called "socialism of responsibility." Naturally, a moderate fraction of the Socialist Party — the *Nouvel Observateur* current, for example — will judge that things are too Jacobin, and that the law of the market is violated too openly. On the other hand, there are still people who will fear that an excess of decentralization may engender a form of "laissez-faire" harmful to the national community, by doing away with the safeguards against the small-village spirit.[14] But, on

14. These are the words of J.P. Garnier, an editor of the CERES review, in *Metropolis* No. 51. That issue, entitled "Le local, le central et le capital," is devoted to proving the thesis that the new government's project is very simply the same one attributed to Giscard for the past seven years, but which, for obscure reasons, he had not put into practice, i.e., the short-circuiting of the "national" between the "local" (where social policy and hegemony would be assured) and the "global" (where the macro-economy would be taken care of). Aside from the fact that I believe this short-circuiting to be as impossible now as ever, it seems to go against the project of all Socialist Party tendencies.

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the whole, and as might have been expected, the "absurd polarization" is a thing of the past. It was Chevènement and Delors together who recommended the "pause" in reforms in Fall, 1981 (before the truly social reforms had even begun); while Michel Rocard, assigned to the Plan, feels the soul of a planner swelling up within him.

So much the better. The true, the only real polarization has come back to the surface: the polarization between the masses of workers and the social movements on one side, and reaction on the other, with the latter playing on old corporatist reflexes in the aim of building a mass base. Between these two forces, with a world crisis lurking above, what are the chances for a social-democratic stabilization?

*Capital has Quit the Rendez-vous*

The economic-social policy in the making has a two-fold inspiration: liberal Keynesian and state-directivist. The 1982 budget corresponds to the first inspiration. The idea is to recreate the virtuous cycle of Fordist growth. To do so, one must stimulate the purchasing power of the popular classes without weighing too heavily on enterprises, so as to stimulate investment as well. Presumably, as the enterprises see their profits and potential markets grow, they will not fail to invest, modernize and create jobs. Since the world market — whose expansion brought French growth in its wake after 1968 — is stagnant, one cannot expect miracles here. Productivity gains on the order of 3-4% (5-6 a few years ago) allow for a shortening of the work-week, but exclusively within the framework of a strict control of the purchasing power of the average annual wage (with compression of hierarchy); the only possible rises in purchasing power would come from the growth of social transfer payments (whose financing implies an attack — fiscal, in particular — on the wealthier layers).

Let us note from the start that the shortening of the work-week by one hour per year, being inferior to productivity gains, implies, for a weak rise in production volume (due to the stagnation of purchasing power and modest export gains), a mere *slowing* in the rise of unemployment,[15] whereas the president had been elected to actually reverse the trend altogether. At present, authorities hope at best that, by prolonging school enrollment and advancing retirement age, they can wait for the lowering of demographic pressure in 1985 to solve the problem for them!

However, the continuing world crisis, and France's particular place in it, makes the success of even that enterprise quite uncertain. For it is based on the hypothesis of growth, and on the idea that French consumption will engender (directly or via investment) French production. But one of the legacies of Giscardianism is precisely the extroversion of the economy. All growth of French

15. This is what is demonstrated by the famous "*projections varientielles*" drawn up for the Plan from the D.M.S. model; in five years this reduction "saves" 80,000 jobs with respect to a projected tendency of 400,000 jobs lost! And since 200,000 new jobs are required each year for young people....

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consumption gives rise to a disproportionate rise in imports; the trend is even more marked for French investment. We thus run against the barrier of outside constraints.

Whence the second source of inspiration of the economic policy, the winning back of the domestic market, or the home-centered restructuring of the productive apparatus, around the core of nationalized enterprise and with the aid of public credit, especially in the area of technology — in short, the reinforcement of state capitalism.[16]

This strategy depends on three conditions: 1) No great aggravation of the world crisis. Here, not much can be done. 2) Acceptance by workers of a compromise which would be less advantageous than that of Grenelle in June, 1968. And 3) The return of a notable portion of private entrepreneurs, executives and upper state administrators, to a developmentalist and nationalist ideology.

Here is where the Giscardian rupture weighs heavily. The dynamic, modernist entrepreneur who appreciates the favorable macro-economic effects of the rise in hourly wages has simply vanished. Premier Mauroy and Finance Minister Delors have often repeated their moving appeals to private enterprise, but the social base of the *Echange et Projet* group, which had backed the "New Society" campaign of Chaban-Delmas and favored Mitterrand in 1973, is no longer responding.[17] Where have they disappeared to? Roughly speaking, those who had been modernists at the end of the 1960's have become *mondialistes*. They no longer have any particular interest in French growth. In France, they seek to produce at lesser cost while maintaining maximum freedom to lay off workers. This ideology has penetrated not just the "divine right" sector of the bosses, but also the "technostructure" and even a portion of production-related executives (such as the engineers at Matra who threatened to emigrate to the U.S. if their firm was nationalized). Typical is the case of Pierre Moussa, reputed to be socialist at heart but who, as head of the financial group most traditionally linked to public expenditure, "emigrated to Coblence" [i.e., conveyed large sums of money to Switzerland — translator's note] when he perceived the nationalization of Paribas as an attack of the multi-national instrument he had built.[18] As for the non-modernist small

16. By this I am simply designating productive enterprises which are state property, and capitalist by the production relations which reign there. I stress that this term implies neither bureaucracy nor the Gulag: I happen to think that the French nationalized firms are and will continue to be the most dynamic and on the whole the most socially advanced in France. Also, I believe that state capitalism is a good way to move beyond the short-term rationality of private capitalism which, by investing only in view of profits realized and markets anticipated, has allowed the French productive system to become both dependent and extroverted since 1974. See A. Hamdouche, "Investissements privés, investissements publics en France. Evolutions et déterminants (1959-1979)" in *Cahiers du Centre d'Etudes Industrielles* No. 3, Paris, 1982.

17. Whence the legendary bitterness of Delors. In his interview in the *Nouvel Observateur* (No. 310, November 9, 1981), in response to the question "Have you somewhat revised the idea you had of France?," he replied: "France is more immutable than changing. I had expected that the factors of modernity would be more widespread among the small and big decision-makers."

18. In the same vein, the monthly magazine *Expansion*, which at the end of the 60's had been the main organ of a modernist, social-democratic current of entrepreneurs, spent the first six

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or medium entrepreneurs, they have remained reactionary along with their management staff, and see no reason to accept Delors' offers. Their "investment strike" has more than simply ideological motives. Placed on the bad side of "dual society," often in a sub-contracting position, they know that their competitiveness resides exclusively in the super-exploitation of workers, which the government's social policy seeks to curb. They perceive the nationalization of the firms on which they are dependent exclusively as a threat of "reintegration" of the tasks which they have sub-contracted up to now.

This very real duality of the industrial apparatus of the Giscardian era contradicts, in the short term, the dream of a "good duality" of a mixed economy, i.e., large national enterprises embedded in a dense tissue of modern, socially conscious and dynamic small and medium-sized firms.

Everything will therefore rest on the shoulders of the nationalized sector and the high administration. Significantly, the older representatives of a modernist medium-sized capitalism, such as Bidegain and Neuschwander, have taken refuge in this sector. However, even here the developmentalist party has been reduced very much to a minority, and the Socialist administration —either by excessive timidity, or for fear of a rise in Communist-controlled trade-union power, or simply for lack of available personnel[19] — have failed to move boldly to change the composition of this sector. One has the impression that the men placed by the Socialist Party at the head of Giscardianized state institutions (administrations or large enterprises) have taken less than six months to fall under the sway of the mentalities prevailing there. "Habitus," as Bourdieu would say, like the Germans in the Roman Empire, or the Bolsheviks in the Russian Empire! The meager "new rights" promised to workers will not suffice to reverse this tendency.

Under these conditions, the real cleavages within the Socialist Party-State are between those who willingly seek to adapt to the inherited model — i.e., respect for the "great equilibriums," free trade, and private capitalism — and those who hew to a more voluntarist, Jacobin, nationalist or even protectionist line. This is not a "right-left" opposition. Of course, any popular offensive which makes it difficult to respect compromises within the prevailing free-enterprise context would probably lead to a reinforcement of the public sector and a protectionist policy. But it must be understood that this Jacobin sector of the high public administration and the leaders of public enterprises are total partisans of the productivist ideal and the cult of "specialists" which make up the very soul of the Fordist model. In this sense, there are no people more "Japanese" in France than the technical managers of Renault, Electricité de France or the national railways (SNCF).

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months of "change" locked in a hostile attitude toward the new administration, adopting a stance to the right of the *Nouvel Economiste* and sometimes close to the *Quotidien de Paris*.

19. Such is the excuse suggested by the satirical weekly *Le Canard Enchainé*, which expressed its shock at the promotion of C. Stoffaës, theoretician of the dual society and architect of the policy of actively extroverting the economy, to a strategic post in the Ministry of Industry.

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*And as Arlette* Would Say, Workers Have Nothing to Gain....*

What do people such as these have to offer to the working class? Once again: a watered-down version of Grenelle. Let us recall that Grenelle represented a compromise, marking the end of "monopolist regulation" and the beginning of the most recent wave of intensive growth (1968-1974). For the workers, there was a shortening of the work-week (already!), a solidifying of social legislation, full employment and rising purchasing power (sigh). For the bosses: *carte blanche* to restructure, mechanize, robotize and generalize work. The Communist Party and the CGT held to this compromise in spite of a new working class left, which sought to promote struggles against the capitalist reorganization of labor, as against purely quantitative gains. These struggles ran out of steam as soon as the crisis period opened, with employment and income becoming the dominant preoccupations.

However, as early as Fall, 1981, we may observe — distant echo of the 1970-71 struggles — a flurry of strikes against capitalist productivity in the automobile industry. Not that workers are against productivity. What they reject, and justly so, is that productivity be imposed by a mechanism foreign to them, to the detriment of their minds and their health. Now, this "re-appropriation of the instrument of labor," which is of course difficult but ardently wished for by what still makes up a majority of the working class[20] — from the young unskilled worker disgusted by the job he is given to the "*ouvrier professionnel*" disgusted by the de-skilling of his job — is an aspiration which is totally foreign to the developmentalist framework, the great majority of the Socialist Party and the vision of Labor Minister Jean Auroux. The Plan, through its omissions, is woefully clear on this point: creativity is the business of managers and technicians: "The extension of workers' rights, far from reducing the responsibilities devolving on leaders, will allow for a more intense and richer social dialogue, making the enterprise a more lively place and favoring its advancement. Within the enterprise, the technically-trained executives and supervisors will play an active role in introducing modern technical processes and methods, improving work conditions and making the quality of goods and services evolve." (p. 58) Of course, no one in the Socialist Party, and less still in the Communist Party, would hesitate to add the highly qualified workers to this list, nor to advocate the re-skilling of labor. But it is on a single group, which makes up a tiny and shrinking majority, that "technical culture" would still repose: a social bloc which would unify the imaginative entrepreneur and the technically handy worker with the technician fond of innovations. This social bloc sends us back to the epic times of Mermoz' *Aéropostale*, or the *Ordinuovismo* of the young Gramsci, but today it exists in a vestigial state, in declining industrial areas like the Seine Saint-Denis or Saint-

* Translator's note: Arlette Laguiller is the spokesperson of a small Trotskyist group called *Lutte Ouvriére*; she first gained national recognition for her impassioned televised appeals to worker solidarity during the presidential campaign of 1974.

20. See Danièle Linhart, *L'Appel de la siréne,* (Sycomore, 1981).

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Etienne and — in a very marginal form — in certain highly advanced technical industries.

And what of the rest? The immigrants on auto assembly lines? The women who assemble electronic equipment? And all those young people who have spent several years going from one precarious job ("*boulot*," not "*métier*") to another? All those for whom work, as a concrete activity, is a form of repulsion — a purgatory made necessary by the need for money or social insertion? To bring them into the above bloc would require more than just "enterprise democracy" — it would require a veritable socio-technological revolution. This is not what the Socialist Party has in mind; it expects progress only from electronic fleas and bacteria. Or, as Mao once said of Deng: "He sees only technique and supervisors; he knows nothing of politics and the masses."

Immobilism, then, with respect to one of the two pillars of the wage relation: the relation between the direct producer and the means of production. What is being offered regarding the conditions of sale of labor power? A package of undecisive measures whereby, in exchange for a timid shortening of the workweek and maintenance of income, the bosses demand more and more freedom to decide how daily, monthly and annual work time will be shared out.

I propose a conjecture which cannot be proven but in which I deeply believe. Supposing that on May 20, 1981, in the midst of the post-electoral euphoria, the President had declared, in the Churchillian tone of which he is capable: "The hour is grave. There is an absolute evil: unemployment. I propose a complete sharing of labor: a 35-hour workweek or even less, without delay, so as to obtain an immediate and massive hiring of personnel — at the price, if necessary, of a reduction in monthly incomes except for the lowest wages." I submit that the majority of workers would have accepted it and would even have consented to negotiate the full utilization of machines (and thus a new wave of shift work, but this time in shifts of six hours or less).

A compromise of this sort, implying the overall renegotiating of the wage relation, would indeed have opened new horizons for the workers' use of time. When one works six or seven hours a day, one can accept forms of leisure which are based more on creative activity than on monetary consumption. but when one is offered 12 minutes less per day, one can only feel the loss in wages, and one knows full well that there will be no consequent hiring.

The Socialist Party hesitated to effect such a revolution. As for the *Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail* (CFDT), which could have backed such a project, its so-called "*recentrage*"[21] has led it to internalize the necessities of "capitalist accounting" to such a degree that it was the first labor organization — as early as June, 1981 — to advocate instituting a 35-hour work-week over a period of five years. Worse still, even the one-hour reduction in the work-week without a drop in wages failed to win the support either of the

21. See "La double complexité...." *op. cit.* If I rail against the CFDT, it's a sort of lovers' quarrel. After all, the CGT is only following the line it has always put forward.

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bosses or the CFDT. When the ordinance of February, 1982 was issued, doing away with the 40th hour, workers had to fight for full compensation for the hour eliminated. And yet this compensation was one of the central features of the Plan. Since the shortening of the workweek by a single hour does not create jobs, then in the absence of growth, all lowering of wages (added to the 1% rise in social security taxes) reduces demand and jeopardizes the recovery, and thus contributes to more unemployment. That is why the Plan states clearly: "a one-hour shortening of the workweek should occur, from the time it takes effect, without a reduction in per capita wages. Subsequent negotiations should take into account the resulting hourly rise in wages, without provoking a loss in purchasing power. These projections should be understood as averages, and should therefore pose no obstacle to the faster rise of the lowest wages and the slower rise of higher ones." (p. 66)

Mitterrand was saying nothing different when he arbitrated, in March, 1982, in favor of full compensation for the eliminated hour.[22] The workers, the CGT, and the CFDT rank and file were perfectly right to fight for compensation. And CFDT secretary Edmond Maire was perfectly out of line in speaking of a "*faux pas* which sacrifices employment to purchasing power." There was only one *faux pas*, and it was a disastrous one because it precluded all curbing of unemployment: the refusal of the 35-hour week without delay, that is, a new sharing out of restricted time and free time, and thus a break with the one-dimensional logic of production.

In February, 1982, workers were not fighting only for compensation; they were fighting also — and especially — for control over the sharing-out of the new total volume of hours worked. This is what a woman in the metallurgy sector of the CFDT explained in her very interesting assessment of the strikes in the Paris region, in an interview with Daniéle Linhart. The latter concludes: "They [the workers] are being offered an hour less per week and a fifth week of vacation spread out over the year. All this represents nothing decisive with respect to the status quo they have created with their absenteeism, among other factors. On the other hand, what is demanded in return by management, i.e., flexibility in the sharing-out and modulation of work-time, reinforces their power over the organization of the wage-earners' time. That is what counts the most for workers, the lost of which they object to the most. What they want is individual and collective control over their labor time. They want to choose for themselves. Variable work schedules, as you have shown,

22. Significantly, no one thought of associating this presidential verdict with the recommendations of the Plan voted through only two months before! The decision was interpreted, on the contrary, as a capitulation to CGT pressure — although workers and unionists of all tendencies were struggling around this issue. Let us note as well that the CFDT had been the first organization to support the famous agreement with the BSN company leading to a 33-hour workweek paid at 40 hours, without new hiring. As for those who believe that, without compensation of wages, the bosses would have been incited to hire, I invite them to reflect on the following: with the 1% rise in social security taxes, the earnings of wage-workers would have fallen by 3.4%. This is equivalent to the total consumption of automobiles by the French. Of course, the newly-hired workers would have consumed....had they been hired. That is the whole problem of "regulation."

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may in a certain way satisfy these expectations. But doesn't the individualization of worktime constitute an important damper on trade-union action?"[23] The union militant replied to this question by criticizing routine methods and the frequent refusal by her union comrades to take real workers' aspirations into account. Union "purists" reject moveable work schedules and even the tendency by the workers to consolidate non-working hours into meaningful packages (such as all day Wednesday, or Friday afternoon, for example). Their claim is that this would damage the class solidity and demobilize it with respect to the main arena of struggle within the enterprise.

One well understands how such a refusal of the masses' aspirations leaves the field open to the bosses' initiatives and aggravates the crisis of traditional unionism. Between a management which seeks to transform its loss in work time into a gain the flexibility in the use of that time, and a multi-faceted wage-earning population whose crisis-ridden unionism no longer expresses widely diverse aspirations and interests in terms of unifying objectives for struggle, the government has chosen the worst of all policies: the accumulation of half-measures which offer no tangible advantage, but in which each sacrifice of past gains can only provoke clamor and solidify corporatist interests.

I do not wish by any means to incriminate trade-union militants who are working hard to cope with a very difficult situation; nor to formulate yet another accusation of reformist betrayals. I simply want to point out a perverse dynamic: By not proposing a radical reform of the wage relation, the government leaves no opening for the formation of a popular bloc which could provide support for its economic and industrial policy; on the contrary, it is simultaneously nourishing criticism from the right and workers' discontent which crystallizes itself in corporatist reactions. It is fortunate, at least, that these legitimate corporatist reactions can express themselves via the CGT rather than via fascist channels! Lacking clear aims and a sufficient balance of forces, the labor movement (and workers more generally) have proven unable to autonomously formulate an alternative project. It thus leaves the government, strongly pressured by the Right, and operating according to a logic which is developmentalist at best and pro-free-enterprise at worst, to advance proposals which are less and less suggestive of "change."

To carve out an alternative project would imply a profound challenge to trade-union practices. The organized labor movement should take into account the *diversity* of the profiles of wage-earners (not *just* the technicians, not *just* the "mass workers," not *just* the "precarious workers"). It should take into account the diversity of radical aspirations within each individual instead of locking people into the status of proletarians to be defended as much against their own worst penchants as against the boss. No one is just a producer: one is also a woman, a lover, a handyman, a citizen, an immigrant, a musician....The labor movement should resist the temptation of internalizing apparently objective constraints (and thus running the risk of being

23. *Partis Pris*, No. 34, February, 1982.

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more attentive to the language of the technocrats than to the real aspirations of the masses) without ceding to the corporatist outbidding tactics. Once again, the situation is difficult and complex. But the progressive re-awakening of the base, and the non-repressive response that can hoped for from the government,[24] has opened a space for the development of mass movements for the first time since 1976 (the last big wave of struggle against crisis conditions).

*Those Famous "New Middle Classes"*

Very similar problems are encountered on the other slope of the social-democratic stabilization policy: the installing of a new network of relay-classes which will occupy new institutions and fill out the new hegemonic bloc. With the decentralization and the aid to associative movements — including the law on free radio stations — the government has shown that it is in this area that it intends to move the fastest. This is of course the "easiest" area, in spite of its long-term nature, because it is here that economic and the most basic forms of class struggle weigh the least. It would be deeply erroneous, however, to believe that the "new petty bourgeoisie" seeks only to occupy the place left vacant by the collapse of older, archaic layers and the passivity of the popular masses.

First of all, what is the "new petty bourgeoisie?" If one defines it as those middle and upper categories of the public or private service sector, it will suffice to note that these layers have in fact existed for a long time (since the stabilization of the Republic at the end of the last century; they were already part of the "new elites" appealed to by Gambetta); they already had their place, in a certain manner, in the old hegemonic system. When one reads, in the editorial of the first issue of the review *Non!* that "the May '68 theme will allow the neo-petty bourgeoisie to play the role which has henceforth been assigned to them: subcontracting the tasks of supervision over the popular layers," one can only get lost in conjectures as to who is actually designated. For, after all, the supervisory tasks are by definition a part of the profession of executives (*cadres*), and the "Republic of teachers" does not date from June 20, 1981. Such a formulation, (if it does not result from pure ignorance) must therefore mean something like the following: "New petty-bourgeois wage-earners (other than schoolteachers and professors who have been occupying the territory as hussars of the Republic) will be given new supervisory tasks (other than strictly professional) which they will assume in the name of libertarian, feminist and ecological themes." In other words, private executives will seize control of townships and associations in the name of the May '68 revolt.

I do not know whether such a prospect actually frightens the CERES, or (already!) overjoys it. The real problem is that any hope that this will result in a social-democratic consolidation is, in my view, illusory.

24. I say "hope for." The anti-nuclear movement has experienced the contrary, in a situation, true enough, where it was apparently reduced to a violent minority activity.

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The executive layers may perceive themselves from different angles: 1) As "owners" of a *savoir-faire* that they exercize for wages, thus from the liberal-professional angle; 2) As executors of delegated missions of command; 3) As intellectual fragments of the collective wage workers.

Obviously, these three components are mixed in variable proportions according to the effective place of a given executive in the relations of production. But the cocktail which makes up the "habitus" of the executive is itself modified and consolidated by school education, concrete forms of relations to other categories, the institutions which undertake to represent its interests, etc. In a remarkable article, Luc Boltanski[25] shows that in fact the "bourgeois wage-earners" are deeply polarized in their world-views along the axis of public vs. private sector; and within the private sector, along the axis of "management" vs. "technique." Private executives, whether they are products of top management schools or in-house promotion, believe in values as "rebellious" as....hierarchy, competence and competition![26] As for those who refuse these values and come for the most part from mainstream universities (*pes facultés*), they have taken refuge precisely in the civil service (and especially in research, teaching and socio-cultural work); Daniel Cohn-Bendit once said of this sector that its very existence stifles the possibility of a network of alternative institutions like that of West Germany.

These observations not only place the "absurd polarization" between Rocard and Chevénement once again into perspective and reduces it to a complementarity of aspirations within a single social category (participation in the central state as opposed to local initiative), but also challenge the whole notion of a polarization between "old elites to the Right" and "new elites to the Left." In fact, petty bourgeois wage-earners can be "May '68ers" only through aspect No. 3 (critique of the division of labor, hierarchy, the power of money); for aspect No. 1 takes the form of "creativity." They can be on the Left through specific combinations of 1, 2, and 3 under the dominant theme of "wage-earner" as opposed to "wealthy" (*possédant*), but in that case they will tend to exchange their "cultural capital" for public power (this is the "developmentalist aspect of the technocrats, whose state directivism is akin to that of the teacher-deputies in the National Assembly), or for a wage in rent form, and, as is most often the case, both of these together. This is, after all, the very basis of the left version of the traditional hegemonic system; the Republic of teachers has always sought to recruit the children of the older middle classes into the civil service. This ideology of the competent and responsible functionary is hardly accessible to the "68 spirit" and is undermined by a con-

25. "L'Université, les entreprises et la multiplication des salariés bourgeois" in *Actes de la recherche en Sciences Sociales*, No. 34, 1980.

26. Contrary to a legend which gained currency in 1978 on the basis of the literary successes of a few ex-Maoists, competitive individualism was not a "value" of May '68. The dominant values of that movement was, on the contrary, solidarity and liberty. Historians may verify this by feeding archive material to their computers. By contrast, the young militants of the RPR [Jacques Chirac's party], more "absolutely modern" than Serge July himself, and fed to the gills with the elitist thesis of the New Right, are perfect representatives of this ideology.

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tradiction between its corporatist-rentier facet and its developmentalist-modernist facet.

However, the "neo-petty bourgeois" may be predominantly to the Right if their cultural capital and their command power welds them to the bloc of property owners and liberal elites. Such indeed is the behavior of the majority of upper executives — but not middle-level ones — who stayed largely in the sway of the Right in 1981. The corporatist organizational forms of the executives (their representation on enterprise committees, retirement plans, etc.) tendentially reconstitutes the bloc of executives (including "middle" and even "lower" ones) and the wealthy: this is the phenomenon that in Chile, under Allende, was known as *gremialism.* This is what the *Confédération Général des Cadres* (CGC) plays on, as well as the autonomous teachers unions, "Medical Solidarity" (sic) and others.

Unfortunately, here again, the Socialist Party is doing nothing to break up this bloc, autonomize the middle executives with respect to the upper executives and aggravate the contradiction which opposes them overall to the wealthy. None of this is easy to do and it would require radical reforms. Without even speaking of the division of labor, let us consider the problem of taxation and other mandatory payments to the state (such as social security dues). At present, the share of mandatory payments on income adds up to only half for non-wage-earners of what it does for wage-earners; the burden is greater on industrial workers than on upper executives (because of the ceiling on social security payments and the family quotient). Executives recover 150% of what they pay into their retirement funds; manual workers, 101%[27] Only a drastic reform attacking the interests of the non-wage-earning wealthy, could re-establish solidarity among wage-earners without making the executives scream. The Socialist Party's projects seem to be far removed from this perspective; and this tends to lend credence to the idea that the gremialist defense of acquired advantages pays.

A similar phenomenon is occurring within those middle classes which are considered typically "archaic": the farmers. Nonetheless, it has been 15 years since the layer of so-called "dynamic small entrepreneurs," the middle-sized farmers, have succeeded in modernizing and evicting from the leadership of their unions the traditional agrarian classes who had rallied the peasantry together under the banner of "property." Today, the newer elites, products of the Gaullist agricultural policy, who seek to unite the farmers against the Left government do so as "entrepreneurs," exacting protection from the state against the European Economic Community price-setting mechanism, natural disasters, etc. To break up this modernist-gremialist agrarian bloc would involve insisting on the "productive" aspect of the small farmer, and in particular the "producer exploited by agro-business firms and the Crédit Agricole bank;" this would require a radical reform of the status of farmer and a challenge to the productivism which predominates in agriculture. This,

27. See C. Blum-Girardeau, *Les tableaux de la Solidarité*, D. E. Economica, 1981).

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indeed, is what is demanded by the farmers' organized Left, in particular the *Confédération des Travailleurs Paysans* led by Bernard Lambert. In this case, then, there is an alternative project formulated by a social movement, and as G. Allaire has noted, it is up to the government to construct a Left social base and break up the organic monopoly of the *Fédération Nationale des Syndicats des Employés de l'Agriculture* (FNSEA) by underwriting the demand for reform from a progressive sector of the base. It is the government's turn to move — but once again, even more markedly and with even less excuse than in the 35-hour work-week affair, it has hesitated, toyed with half-measures, and allowed the FNSEA's gremialist oppposition to consolidate itself.[28]

For neither the executives nor the farmers, then, is there an identity relation between "socio-economic novelty" and a socialist stance, or even support to a Left government. Not only do the upper executives and the "small dynamic entrepreneurs" of agriculture have no strategic interest in questioning the capitalist order in general, but even tactically they have no evident interest in "change," because they had already found their place in the "blocked society," whether it be because the latter managed to adjust itself or because they had an interest in retaining the values of the archaic hegemonic bloc. What is more serious, the failure to challenge the structures which allow these categories to support the immediate demands which place other "supporting layers" under their leadership (middle executives, the entire farming population) favors the consolidation of blocs of professionals which unite "those above" with "those below" against the Left government: *that* is gremialism.

From this viewpoint, it would no doubt have been preferable to look after the complementary retirement funds (which by their very existence constitute the statute of executive) or the parastate agricultural apparatus (which at present is largely the fiefdom of the FNSEA) rather than choosing by priority to reform the sharing out of powers between the local and national levels of the state (*"le pays légal"*). For elections to posts of political responsibility merely sanction the crises or the consolidation of class alliances which are formed elsewhere. If the Right exercises hegemony over the center on this terrain, it will win local elections even more easily than the national ones, and the decentralization will merely provide it with another weapon for consolidating its clientéle.[29]

All things considered, the likelihood of a social-democratic stabilization is anything but evident. The victory came too late: the crisis of Giscardian "*mondialisation*" (that is, economic extroversion unfavorable to France) jeopardized its economic base. The difficulties have come far less from leftist outbidding tactics from the workers' rank and file (which has been remarkably reasonable for the past year) than from the brutal refusal of the possessing classes and all other elites, modern or archaic, to make peace. In this situation,

28. See the interview with B. Lambert and the article by G. Allaire (an editor of *Nouvelles Campagnes*) in *Partis Pris*, No. 35, March, 1982.

29. As I re-read this text before sending it to the printer on the day after the first round of cantonal elections (April, 1982), I can only shudder at this prospect.

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the possibility of a revolutionary dynamic growing out of a Left electoral experience is totally mythical, given the ideological disarray of most of the social movements; but explosions of discontent, traded off for corporatist advantages, are not to be excluded....and they would be catastrophic. They would make all the more probable a gremialist crystallization of discontent or disappointment, which would be sanctioned quickly by an electoral defeat of the Left.

Particularly dangerous would be the following line of reasoning: "Votes for the Left cannot move rightward; the main thing is to hold the center by governing from the center." This argument forgets that the base of the Left can become demobilized. Who can "conquer the center" if not the social base of the Left? What can accomplish this, if not those millions of discussions, pursued over several years, between relatives, friends, colleagues, in which people who have been won over to the Left — all tendencies included — slowly convince others that "with the Left, things will be better?" Today, these supporters are hushing up in embarrassment; or else they are already acknowledging that "they" [the Left politicians] are no better than the others. The Socialist government, drunk on its victory, rapidly burned its bridges with the ecologists and the far Left (who make up, after all, 10-20 of the "people of the Left"), who had culturally prepared the victory over a ten-year period and supported it politically in the final years preceding the victory. These people will not vote for the Right, and would make it a point to vote against a Chirac,[30] but they will no longer struggle to urge others to vote for the Socialist Party.

Today, in reality, the only probable center of gravity on the Left — if there is such a point — is further to the Left than the social modernism which has characterized up to now the government of Premier Mauroy. To consolidate the social bases of change means first of all not losing strength on the Left (among former *gauchistes*, Left ecologists and related groups, but also among former Communist Party members for whom being disgusted with Georges Marchais does not mean being any less demanding on the Socialists); it also means transforming the conditions of existence of the "center" so that it may begin to perceive any step backwards from reform as a disadvantage. Radical reforms are called for to modify the general conditions for class alliances moving in the direction of certain popular aspirations: not the consolidation of corporatist demands, but the challenge — partial at least — to certain basic social relations, such as the wage relation, the status of the farmer, etc.

Paradoxically, then, the consolidation of social-democratic reformism must take place via a more "radical" turn (which is, incidentally, a constant in French history, where "reforms are made only under the impact of revolutions"). The current government will spontaneously oppose this, not so much by a pusillanimity traditionally considered to be the very mark of reformism; nor by the tactical consideration of not wishing to frighten the center;

30. Just as in Germany, they once again preferred Schmidt to Brandt in 1981. But the "citizens' movements" which had supported Brandt are lost to the SPD.

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but because often these radical demands go against modernist-productivist ideology — against the much-vaunted "technical culture." Not that the mechanized but bankrupt farmer-workers, the solar energy fanatics, the unskilled workers in robotized factories, etc. *refuse* "technology." On the contrary, they are saturated with it — often much more so than the literary spirits who sit in the National Assembly. But technology is the materialization of social relations; they are simply not in favor of the *same* technology.

In short, following a rather classic logic, reformists are not attracting mass support because their social (economic, political and cultural) project diverges from popular aspirations; this lack of support weakens the reformists and the entire Left against the Right and thus jeopardizes the "social-democratic stabilization;" The only forces which would be capable of blocking this dynamic are popular movements which would oblige the government to take their aspirations into account, by integrating them into a more advanced overall project.

Thus, one cannot call for "revolutionary opposition" to the Left government. Such a position would be appropriate to a situation in which a combative modernism tried to impose, with the support of a sizeable portion of the bourgeoisie, a restructuration antagonistic to popular interests and aspirations. This is now the case only in energy policy, which is in fact the only domain in which a violent opposition to the current regime has manifested itself from the Left.[31] This is not the case within the working class or the farming population: here, the Right is confronting a government which is already going "too far," and the Left is confronting a government which is not going "far enough." What is required today is not "critical support" (for what?); what is required is to reflect, to make proposals, to struggle for their acceptance and to combat their refusal.[32]

The men and women who have struggled since 1968 — or well before then — in all fields of social change, for justice, freedom, individual and collective emancipation, against stunting and alienating social relations, sometimes against the Socialist Party and usually without it; those who, too often defeated in concrete struggles, have done infinitely more to change mentalities than all the electoral posters vaunting "the other path" and "the quiet force;" those who danced at the Bastille in May, 1981 for the victory of a man who did not represent them but in whom they were ready to place their confidence — these people are faced once again, in spite of their discouragement, with heavy responsibilities. No, things have not become any easier since the victory of the Left. They have only become possible. And not for very long.

31. If one wants to counterbalance this example of anti-popular modernism by the CERES and the Communist Party — with an example of anti-popular Rocardian modernism, one might expect to find it in the area of winegrowing, in which farmers who are currently won over to the Left are fighting free-trade policies. Is that a corporatist reflex? Perhaps. But what does the Left have to win by sacrificing hundreds of thousands of supporters in return for a few centimes less per liter of red table wine?

32. This was not my position in 1976 (see "Derriére les programmes, voir les forces," *op. cit.*) either because the situation has really changed or because, after all, I may have mellowed out a bit (*mis de l'eau dans mon vin*)....

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# MITTERRAND: BETWEEN SOCIALISM AND THE REPUBLIC*

## by Jacques Julliard

Have we reached the twilight of political sociology? Not so long ago, the Gaullist era was its salvation. That great erratic bloc of History, which arose out of nowhere and was such a cumbersome object for those of our generation, was analytically broken up, crushed and pulverized. Interpreted as the harbinger of fascism (by the Communist Party in 1958); the agent of big capital (again the CP in 1959); the hero of the national bourgeoisie (the CP yet again, towards 1966); choir leader of neo-capitalism (for Serge Mallet); avatar of Bonapartism (for René Rémond), Gaullism was everything one could imagine except De Gaulle himself. No one was about to let himself be taken in by those legends of the magic kepi and June 18.[1]

With Mitterrand, there is no such problem. This admirer of Stendhal and compatriot of Chardonne[2] seems more the type to be examined by psychologists. But the analysts are keeping timidly quiet, as if their commentary, with the critical distance it requires, were the first sign of disrespect. And, indeed, it is not so delightful to be written into the history books during one's own lifetime. When the heavy machinery of the *fait accompli* eclipses the will of the actor, the latter is tempted to cry out that he has been caricatured. The nuances of intention are erased, the peaks of desire abolished. Only the gloomy steppes of the "final analysis" remain. Could any subjectivity recognize itself therein? Marxism, in short, is what happens only to others.

*Mitterrand: Between Gambetta and De Gaulle*

Nonetheless, an initial appraisal — or, rather, its outline — is possible. In the Gaullist chronology, we have still only reached 1960— a mere bagatelle. I shall try below to say what place Mitterrand is making for himself alongside his predecessors Jaurès and Blum, Guesde and Mollet. But the main subject is the Republic, that century-long historical track with Gambetta, the founder, at one end, and De Gaulle, the consolidator, at the other. Since his election in May 1981, Mitterrand is forging a place between these two figures, which in itself is not so bad. He has inherited the sociology of the former and the program of the latter. But, like both of them, he stands for a voluntary, personalized, popular Republic as opposed to what Odile Rudelle has called the partisans of "republican abstention," that is, those for whom political immo-

*Translated by Bill Hackman and Jim Cohen.

1. June 18: date of De Gaulle's 1940 radio appeal from London to resist the Nazi occupation. Translator's note.

2. Jacquest Chardonne (1884-?), novelist and essayist from Mitterrand's home region of La Charente. — Translator's note.



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bilism is the condition by which elected officials maintain their hegemony over the electorate.[3] Jules Grèvy and Henri Queuille, separated by 60 years of history, are the malevolent personifications of this republican anonymity.

In the 1960s, DeGaulle had been the eponymous hero of "change." The expression had not yet come into style but the idea was there. The change which took place was so deep that when the general stepped down in 1969, French society was no longer recognizable — the same France which had, for a century, astonished foreigners with its genius for immobility. The De Gaulle years are solidly lodged with the "thirty glorious years" of French growth as chronicled by Fourastié. The De Gaulle era sounded the death knell of a millenium of peasant culture and society, as well as a century of a type of parliamentary régime known as *parlementarisme*. Over time, the two entities had ended up incorporating and penetrating one another to the point of being inseparable. Peasant society was well-suited to government by delegation. The parliamentary régime, as it had been envisioned by Gambetta, found its basis of support in the depths of a society whose economy, habitat, customs and mentalities remained profoundly agrarian. Indeed, it is the Third Republic which best illustrates Marx's famous analysis of Bonapartism: a peasant régime, but by delegation.

Thanks to one of those ironies so abundant in history, it was left to a traditionalist, in the best sense of the word, to break with tradition and favor a transition toward an unpredicatble future. De Gaulle — that is, "empiricism" — presided over the dethroning of a traditional political class and the beginnings of a society seeking to govern itself. In this sense, the young people of 1968 were indeed its children all the same. Irony of fate: Mitterrand, the progressive, will most likely never have the opportunity to preside over as many changes as De Gaulle, the conservative. What has been done is done and cannot be redone. It fell to De Gaulle to break with the past; it has fallen to Mitterrand to receive a legacy. To be sure, this applies only to productive structures, because in the area of social adaptation there is ample room for imagination and generosity.

*A Gaullism of the Left?*

In many respects, 1981 was the revenge of Gaullism of the Left over Giscardianism of the Right. Gaullists of the Left here refers to that small, stubborn band of cuckolds from the Gaullian Republic who have colonized the avenues and the corridors of the Mitterrandian Republic. They are leaping out everywhere, in politics, the economy, the administration, the media; no one could have imagined them to be so numerous. Mitterrand may not be so delighted to be termed a Gaullist of the Left. But, after all, it is too early to label De Gaulle a Mitterrandist of the Right! And like it or not, the facts are there.

The economy first of all: the industrial project is without any doubt the same. The idea is to make industry the instrument of France's power and prosperity by encouraging investment and consumption. This broad Saint-

3. See *La République absolue*, published by the Sorbonne in 1982.

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Simonian project, of which Pompidou was the chief craftsman alongside men like Michel Debré and Albin Chalandon, also inspires Jean-Pierre Chevènenment. But there is an essential difference between the two periods. The Gaullists, during the happy years of expansion, commanded the economy like Jean Christophe controlled the movement of the clouds: in the direction they were naturally headed.[4] This is no longer the case today. We have gone from spontaneous growth to voluntaristic growth, obviously with more modest results. Whence also derives the tendency toward a certain economic nationalism, with which Gaullism had long been able to dispense, but which De Gaulle himself would certainly never have disavowed: recapturing the internal market, extending the field of nationalizations. One is surprised, in this context, by the weak role assigned to the Plan, which after all was born at the Liberation of 1945, amidst the interaction of Gaullists and socialists. One is tempted to say that in postwar France, growth was often conceived of as spontaneous socialism and socialism as concerted growth. The formula has some descriptive value at the infrastructural level of the economy.[5] But aside from the fact that, taken literally, the formula minimizes the properly social objectives of socialism, it also forgets that another socialist politics — undoubtedly the most socialist of all — is theoretically possible: that which consists of setting the law of supply and demand back on its feet and systematically orienting production towards socially useful goods. Why was this orientation not chosen? Undoubtedly, less because of the doctrinal differences traditionally invoked (productivist socialism vs. associative socialism) than because of an emergency factor which would have imposed itself on *any* government: the struggle against unemployment. As soon as absolute priority is given to creating jobs, the degree of social utility of the jobs thereby created becomes a secondary question. Paradoxically, capitalism in crisis imposes its logic, which is to privilege supply, infinitely more than does the capitalism of prosperous times today, the possibility of structural reforms within a capitalist system mired in depression is doubtful.

The parallels between Gaullism and Mitterrandian socialism are not only economic, they are also institutional. The Constitution of 1958, modified in 1962, is undoubtedly the handsomest of General De Gaulle's posthumous gifts to his successors, especially to the Socialists since it allows them to escape the insoluble dilemma of a parliamentary regime: how to govern with the Communists while governing without them. Of course, this mysterious constitution, whose merits the Left took several years to discover,[6] can only function with the well-informed complicity of the electorate. That is enough to condemn it in the eyes of those who look back nostalgically on the days of indirect suffrage and full parliamentarism. Up to now, the electorate, decidedly more logical and consistent than many give it credit for, has always

4. Jean Christophe: protagonist of a novel by Romain Rolland. — Translator's note.

5. The author is referring to highways, ports, bridges and the like, rather than to a discredited notion of vulgar Marxism. — Translator's note.

6. See Olivier Duhamel's excellent book: *La Gauche et la Cinquième République*, (Presses Universitaries de France, 1980).

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given the president the majority he has needed in order to govern. In 1982, when the National Assembly was dissolved and new elections were called, it played the game perfectly, and thereby endowed the constitution with renewed credibility.

*The President's New Clothes*

Mitterrand's personality has done the rest. As he himself has observed, he feels perfectly at ease in an institutional garb which has thoughtlessly been said to be custom-designed for General De Gaulle — although the latter was probably the only figure who could have done without it. In any event, Mitterrand's political experience, his sense of leadership, his aloofness, and that imperceptible distance he is said to maintain even from his most intimate friends — all these traits correspond to the function he occupies. No one today seriously considers challenging these institutions — a situation practically unknown in France for the past two centuries. As for Mitterrand's manner of exercizing presidential power, he is less removed from everyday concerns than was De Gaulle, but not prone to the hairsplitting, ubiquitous style of Giscard. History will no doubt compare him, in this respect, with Pompidou: maintenance and development of the "reserved domain" of the presidency, great latitude left to the prime minister in his role of superminister of labor and economic affairs, and *ad hoc* intervention in urgent matters. The presence of Communist ministers in the government is not without its advantages, for it is thus possible to involve them in governmental decisions while keeping them under surveillance. But this situation is not without its ambiguity because it allows the CPF to use its secure bases just as Joseph Prudhomme used his sword: to defend our institutions and, if need be, to combat them.

The Socialist President and government has an honorable record to show so far. De Gaulle devoted his initial grace period to re-founding the state and the republic (with the constitution and the settlement of the Algerian War): Pompidou promoted industrialization; Giscard reconciled our laws with our mores (divorce and abortion laws, lowering the voting age to 18); as for Mitterrand, he has used this time to pursue two main objectives: decreasing inequalities, a task which had become especially urgent because the crisis had dangerously lowered the threshold of tolerance to these; and restoring confidence in democracy, in particular via liberalization of the legal system. This latter task has been executed under excellent conditions thanks to Minister Robert Badinter, even if the problem of news and communication remains serious. The economic cost of the first series of social measures has been high; a better evaluation of the constraints of the period would have no doubt made it possible to obtain the same results at lesser cost. But a full evaluation of Mitterrand's record in the months following his victory must take into account the high expectations that the prospect of a Left government had aroused: who will ever be able to measure the cost of disappointment (in terms of strikes and disorders) that a "wiser" and more prudent policy might have pro-

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voked? In choosing decompression, symbolized in 1981 by a fairly unreasonable budget, Mitterrand was not committing the sin of underestimating the economy; he was acting, as always, quite deliberately with respect to political considerations which seemed uppermost to him. But neither should one underestimate the cost of this politically wise prodigality. It spared the short term but sacrificed the long term. The carelessness of 1981 generated the austerity of 1982-1983 and the dictatorship of the conjunctural. Under these conditions, how could the reforms be anything more than a brief sunbath? Thus, the manner in which a one-hour reduction in the work week was decided and applied — that is, without effect on upper and middle incomes — jeopardized further reductions which had been projected. Certain declarations by Premier Pierre Mauroy indicate that the promise to reduce the work week to 35 hours by 1985 may not be kept. Thus, a measure which in the minds of its trade union promoters had all the importance of a structural reform, since it aimed to lower unemployment through a better distribution of labor time, may wind up becoming a mere "social" concession. Consequently, by the end of 1982, the government's struggle against unemployment had been reduced to the pursuit of economic growth wherever possible, which conforms neither to the possibilities of the moment nor to the spirit of socialism. By contrast to classic capitalist assistance programs, which make social measures into a simple appendix of economic development — a pure dividend of growth — socialism attempts to establish a genuine harmony between social programs and economic policy. As journalist Pierre Drouin has rightly pointed out, "It is strange that only the labor *financially* recognized by a society has become the measure of individual dignity. As a result, employment has become a goal in itself, which is dangerous because it is the *product* of labor that is the source of wealth and an asset to the nation — not employment."[7] Through a strange aberration, it is the production of wealth which has today become the means and employment the goal, whereas it is, of course, the inverse which should be the case. The socialist critique of productivism implies no reduction in the level of production, no economic Malthusianism, but merely a struggle against the capitalist perversion of the productive act. In many respects, the current crisis is only the effect of this perversion, which is why the desperate pursuit of growth can only aggravate the disease instead of curing it. The only way out of this crisis is the *socialist* way, which privileges the social utility of production over the blind expansion of its volume. A portion of industrial labor has today become *insignificant*, that is, devoid of meaning. The way out of the crisis urgently implies a redefinition of the purposes of the productive act; but the gravity of the crisis makes this redefinition a dangerous affair: *that* is the main difficulty for the socialist government. But the government cannot remain tied to an undefined and potentially limitless productivism, no matter how generous its intentions. Today the principal criterion of socialism is not the juridical form of appropriation of the instruments of production but the social nature of the objects produced.

7. *Le Monde*, September 22, 1982.

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*Between Two Continents, the Eternal Promontory*

There remains foreign policy and, here, the parallels are still more striking. This will surprise only those who have too superficial a view of Mitterrand or too polemical a vision of De Gaulle. In truth, they share a common vision of national independence, a common conception of European and world balance, and a common aspiration to making France the leader of the secondary powers against the hegemonism of the two superpowers. Such a policy has its own logic and its own imperatives. This explains why the Left's rallying to the French nuclear dissuasion force took place quite naturally. True, one might object that, by a seeming paradox, Mitterrand's foreign policy is altogether less anti-American, and more pro-Atlantic, than that of the General. The latter had made himself the champion of détente, a Europe stretching to the Urals, and a certain collaboration with the Soviet Union. But these attitudes owed everything to circumstances, nothing to ideology. No one would imagine De Gaulle to be complacent in the slightest *vis-à-vis* Communism, any more than one would suspect Mitterrand of being "pro-American," given his apparently total lack of sympathy with Anglo-Saxon culture. However, times have changed. In 1965, American power dominated the world and its troops were engaged in a desperate war of reconquest in Vietnam. It was only logical, in the name of global balance, to support certain Soviet initiatives. Today, on the contrary, Soviet power has become preponderant, particularly in Europe, where it is posing a direct threat to independence. The Red Army is engaged in an imperialist adventure in Afghanistan. It is only normal, for the same reasons as before — namely the need to restore military balance on the European continent — to support certain American initiatives.

With respect to the Third World, the Guallian legacy to Mitterrand is no less striking. One recalls the extraordinary popularity the General forged for himself from the Ivory Coast to Cuba when he championed national independence and the resistance to superpower hegemony. Mitterrand's motives are, of course, different, in particular regarding the needs of the socialist community. But the result is the same. Mitterrand's "Third Worldism," which is not without complacence toward countries like Cuba or Nicaragua, to which certificates of democracy have been accorded without close inspection, seeks to prevent emancipation movements which have shaken Africa, Asia and Latin America since WWII to systematically turn toward the Soviet Union, to the detriment of Western interests.

This latter danger is the inevitable consequence of past and present American policy. As for Mitterrand, he has experience in dealing with the Communists and in compensating for initial handicaps with dynamism and firmness. Georges Marchais and the PCF know this well and have become caught in their own game. The socialist leader appears to be applying on the international scale a tactic which has proven its success in the domestic arena: prevailing over the Communists by challenging them at their own game. The limits of this policy are those which De Gaulle had already experienced, namely the limits of French power in the world. That is why the two statesmen

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— the second with greater conviction, the first with more of a resignation — are finally the standard-bearers of the same conception of Europe: a "European" Europe, neither Atlantic nor Soviet; an "international" Europe, not transnational as Jean Monnet or Robert Schuman[8] had earlier envisioned.

There is, however, a major difference between De Gaulle's politics and those of Mitterrand: the context. The successes of Gaullism are due to the exceptional conjuncture of economic expansion and international détente. The General's diplomacy and his effort to loosen the two superpowers' stranglehold on the world, and his pursuit of French leadership over the middle powers as well as those of the Third World, did not represent a fundamental challenge to the two superpower blocs. It was a mere sideshow to the main event — a diplomatic subset which occupied only a small niche in the world system. De Gaulle never ceased maneuvering in the wings, knowing full well that any new rise in tension between Russians and Americans would oblige him to return to the ranks. In 1968, the invasion of Czechoslovakia, whose importance he sought to minimize, sounded the deathknell of French *Ostpolitik*. De Gaulle himself began to draw this conclusion when the French people withdrew their confidence in him.

Mitterrand's neo-Gaullian diplomacy is the idea of a policy rather than the policy itself. Once again, the Russians and the Americans are confronting each other, with varying results in different world theaters. To make matters worse, it is the Americans who are most often caught in difficult situations. It would thus be irresponsible to abandon them. Yet, it was precisely those little slashes at the Atlantic contract which constituted De Gaulle's discreet charm on the world scene and which allowed him, at minimal risk, to attract the smaller and weaker nations. Today, times are hard and the diplomatic ballet is reduced to a pre-charted choreography.

If one examines the social nature of the support on which Mitterrand draws, however, the break is striking. "Change," which was the buzzword of the first fifteen months of the new regime, was above all the sentiment of those social groups which had felt themselves to be separated from power for a quarter of a century and now were beginning to feel they were once again represented. De Gaulle and his successors were strong in the peasantry, the executives, small and large entrepreneurs and retired poeple. Mitterrand draws his support from workers, white collars, civil servants and young people. Naturally, neither man could have won an election without heavy incursions into each others' fiefs. Thus, in 1958, De Gaulle won away workers' votes which had traditionally gone to the Communist Party; the latter never managed to fully recapture these. In the first round of the 1981 presidential elections, Mitterrand made sharp progress in the middle classes. At the same time, he drew heavily on the working-class electorate of Marchais — yet another point in common with the founder of the Fifth Republic, and one

8. Jean Monnet, an economic planner, and Robert Schuman, a politician, were both instrumental in setting up the European Coal and Steel Community after WWII. — Translator's note.

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which History will record as one of the greatest political changes in France in the past 30 years.

*The New Social Strata*

Mitterrand is in the majority within a broad group, of uncertain contours, which itself forms a national majority: the wage-earning group. That is what he indicated on the day of his inauguration when he stated that France's politics had reconciled itself with its sociology. Former presidents, by contrast, had commanded majorities within the non-wage-earning categories, who make up less than 20% of the working poulation. The problem with the wage-earning group is that it has become so massive and tentacular that it has ceased to be a significant group. It covers such diverse social statuses and income levels that it has ended up including most of the contradictions in society. More explicitly, it would be misleading to see the non-wage-earning group as a gathering of the privileged and the wage-earners as a gathering of the under-privileged. The classic Marxist dichotomy between income from capital and wages from labor maintains a certain descriptive utility, but it is far from summing up completely the conflicts of interests and class struggles. Further analysis is required.

It is clear, first of all, that the left-right voting distribution springs less from the opposition between wage-earners and non-wage-earners than from the opposition between the working population and the inactive population, the majority of which is made up of people in retirement. If only the active population voted, the Left in France would have an overwhelming majority. This working/non-working cleavage goes a long way to explaining a phenomenon which does not fail to surprise those who consider it for the first time: the Left is dominant only in the middle-income range, between 3000-7500 francs per month. Above or below those figures, Giscard d'Estaing would command a majority. The Left is not the party of the poor, but the party of the active (workers, employees, middle executives), who make up a sort of middle-salary class situated in between the world of management and liberal professions (above it) and the inactive category (below it). Further analysis reveals that it was in particular in the public sector (nationalized enterprises and the civil service) that Mitterrand recruited his specific electorate. It was, above all, this world of civil servants, employees and tertiary sector workers which demonstrated its joy at the Place de la Bastille when Mitterrand was elected on May 10, 1981. The working class was happy, but not jubilant. Whence the allusion to Gambetta: if Mitterrand is the heir to a great portion of Gaullist politics, he also expresses the growth of the "new social strata" which make up the new infantry of the Republic. In Marxian terminology one would say that, if the industrial bourgeoisie has remained hegemonic in French society, the middle-wage-earning layers now constitute the "reigning class" within the new power bloc. The sudden arrival in the Palais Bourbon [National Assembly — trans.] of a strong contingent of bearded secondary-level teachers was for the public the symbolic expression of this social ascent. Some people

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jumped to the conclusion that there had been a return to the "Republic of teachers."[9] This would be true if there were still a parliamentary regime; however, this is a presidential regime, which implies, above and beyond the preponderance of the President, a considerable amount of power for the cabinet (*le gouvernement*) and the administration. That is why there is the development of a "power-holding class" which occupies the state apparatus: more precisely the bureaucratic layer, which is different from the earlier one and may be called the state bourgeoisie.

*The State Bourgeoisie*

I attempted to describe this phenomemon five years ago.[10] True, the existence of an autonomous state apparatus is now new. In Marx's view, the rise of this apparatus is one of the characteristic traits of Bonapartism. More recently, Gaullism encouraged the development of an "*Enarchy,*"[11] that is, that autonomous power of the administrators. I wrote in 1977 that "if Mitterrand's socialist republic ever sees the light of day, it may well be a precipitate of the teachers republic so dear to Thibaudet and '*Enarchy,*' with a legislative assembly in which the proportion of high civil servants may well be even greater than in Guizot's time." This forecast was not so bad. The new element is the rise of an intelligentsia whose origin and destination are those of a state class.

Under the Right, the state-manager layers were closely linked to the upper bourgeoisie. During the Giscardian regime, there was even a phenomenon of reverse *pantouflage*,[12] with ministries staffed by men from the private sector. The autonomy of the state apparatus tended to diminish as the permeability between the "summits of the state" and the "summits of the economy" grew.[13] Today, by contrast, the managing intelligentsia put in place by the government is tending to reproduce itself in the economy via the nationalized enterprises. In this sense, the Common Program of the Left, which welded the political alliance of the Socialist and Communist parties, expressed quite exactly the ideology and the interests of a new state bourgeoisie. The concentration of political power, a portion of economic power and a portion of cultural power in the hands of a layer of highly-educated state directors is without a doubt the most important social fact of the current period.

And so where is the working class to be found in all this? One must not forget that it is at the core of the Left's electorate. It has become a supporting class (*classe-appui*) which does not hold power but is indirectly associated with it and benefits from certain of its effects. Such, for example, was the situation of the smallholding peasantry under the Second Empire; and such is the case

9. This is Pierre Birnbaum's opinion in *La Logique de l'Etat*, (Editions Fayard, 1982).

10. *Contre la politique professionnelle*, (Editions due Seuil, 1977).

11. This pun on "anarchy" refers to the power of the civil service elite graduated from the Ecole Nationale d'Administration (ENA). Giscard was an "*énarque,*" but so are several Socialist ministers. — Translator's note.

12. *Pantouflage*, from *pantoufle* (slipper) refers to the practice of moving from a high state administrative post into a private corporate position. — Translator's note.

13. See Pierre Birnbaum's *Les Sommets de l'Etat*, (Editions du Seuil, 1977).

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of workers today, notably via the intermediary of their union representatives. The main danger for the solidity of the alliance is the difficulty of the present period. The crisis does not substantially threaten the positions of the state bourgeoisie, which are institutional; but they do not allow it to give its worker allies the advantages they demand, for these are above all economic. Yet, the alliance has a real solidity, due to the threat, for each of its constituent elements, of the return to power of its adversaries.

*The Solzhenitsyn Effect*

There is no doubt about it: the Socialist Party triumphed in France at the precise moment when the very idea of socialism was falling into deep crisis at the theoretical level. There is no need to seek elsewhere the origin of the persistent malaise between the new government and those intellectuals who are not assimilated into the state apparatus. In explaining the reservations of the more eminent intellectuals, it would be absurd to invoke psychological reactions such as masochism, the fascination of failure, or even a hidden preference for a government of the Right. The problem is much simpler and much more serious: at the very moment when capitalism built on growth began to undergo worldwide difficulties on a scale unprecedented since 1929, and when the party claiming a socialist identity won an unprecedented victory, the intellectuals were reeling from the 'Solzhenitsyn effect," confirmed and aggravated by the events of Afghanistan and Poland. For them, in short, socialism was no longer *the* solution and the future was no longer what it had been. One might interject here that they took awhile to discover what (almost) everyone knew, and that it is paradoxical to hold Brezhnev responsible for things which Stalin was so easily absolved.

Nonetheless, psychologism is worth nothing and it explains nothing. The levels of abomination tolerated by society are not controlled by individual sensibility, but by collective sensibility. Alas! knowledge in this area has hardly advanced at all since Gabriel de Tarde and Gustave Le Bon.[14] In reality, what political criminality is condemned for is not its being criminal, but for its failure; and the great event of the past 15 years — the great event now under way in the "Popular Democracies" — is the political demise of Stalinism. For once, intellectuals are acting not on the basis of concepts, but on realities, and it would be graceless to blame them. For once, their perception of events has moved ahead of common sense, and we are surely not going to regret it. While a party like the Socialist Party is still in the process of discovering the main fact of the postwar era, that is, decolonization, the intellectuals know, for their part, that the decisive game is being played on the Western marches of the Soviet empire. This is true for Lefort and Thibaud, Foucault and Gluckmann, Furet and Bourdieu, Daniel and Revel, Bettelheim and Rodinson, Leroy Ladurie and Ellenstein. My apologies for juxtaposing names in this

14. Gabriel Tarde (1843-1904) was a leading figure in French social psychology, best known for his development of the concept of imitation of figures of prestige or authority. Gustave Le Bon's work on "the crowd" emphasized the notion of domination exercized by figures of prestige, leading to paralysis of critical faculties. — Translator's note.

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fashion. But they are useful in sketching the growing area of a major shift in consciousness. I would add Edmond Maire and Yves Montand, who are intellectuals as well, are they not? And not the least important ones! Naturally, the historical failure of the Stalinist Communism has deeply modified our intellectual vision of capitalism. People are suddenly discovering that it is not always synonymous with poverty, but also with prosperity; that if it does not naturally secrete democracy, it may be the only economic system to tolerate it; that it does not always breed war and is in any case not the only system to do so. The classic criticism of capitalism is that it is synonymous with poverty, war and tyranny. Undeniably, it can accomodate itself to these three plagues. But since socialism seems to accomodate itself to them even better, the question arises: could it be that capitalism is not the specific cause of all the evils it is accused of?

*Beyond the Social: Poverty, War and Tyranny*

Maurice Thorez, as a consistent Communist, had well understood that to abandon the thesis of absolute immiseration of the workers under the capitalist regime paved the way to revisionism. The moment arrived, however, when this thesis became absurd on the face of it. The more daring spitits moved from the critique of scarcity to the critique of consumer society. This audacious dialectical turnover was at best able to convince the intellectuals, executive layers, privileged classes and marginals. But it left the popular milieux cold; they could not understand why the delights of consumerism were passing them by just as they were getting ready to taste them. This was a source of embarrassment to the Communists, who were close to these concerns. The embarrassment grew further when it became clear that the "goulash Communism" promised by Khrushchev was decidedly more difficult to realize than Goulag Communism. Let us not hide it: one of the essential foundations of socialism was shaken. Both "utopians" and "scientific socialists," Fourierists and Marxists, had considered capitalism to be the great anti-consumer system and saw in the famous "productive relations" (i.e., private property) the great obstacle to the development of productive forces. As the old Polish joke says, we had to wait for collectivized agriculture in order for the Marxist thesis to be confirmed: the relations of production contradict the development of productive forces. In short, there is a capitalism of abundance as well as a capitalism of poverty. Even if one allows that the latter is the condition of the former — which remains to be proven — it is still true that socialism, up to now, has shown itself incapable of such a performance, even when it pillages its own Third World.

It is true that capitalist systems have often known war. Not always: often. And on more than one occasion they have borne a direct responsibility for its outbreak. But Communism, in its recent history, has shown itself capable of internecine warfare (the Chinese intervention in Vietnam, and that of the Vietnamese in Cambodia) or external aggressions (the USSR in Afghanistan). Contrary to the official doctrine of socialism, which Jaurès himself appears to

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have espoused, wars are rarely due to purely economic contradictions. They express a will to power which escapes all rationalization.

To these arguments, one might reply: all right, the socialist experience proves *a contrario* that the capitalist regimes are not as universally bad as had been thought. But that is because they took root in ancient and complex societies which cannot be reduced to their economic component. Granted! It is already a good sign that the misadventures of theory have caused it to abandon its profound reductionism.

But what is the connection between all this and Mitterrand's electoral victory? It is obviously not direct, even if it explains to a great extent the reactions of the intellectuals. In reality, one could say that socialism triumphed not *in spite* of but *because* of the difficulties of Communism. All the electoral experts have explained this, and I will not repeat their demonstration. It is based on one simple idea: the Socialist-Communist cocktail could not impose itself in France unless its socialist ingredient was far stronger than the Communist one. In fact, of the three varieties of socialism that are known in the world today — Leninist-Stalinist, social democratic, and Third Worldist — the second is the only one which emerges unscathed from the above criticism. It is for this reason that its place within the family is so strenuously contested. For reasons which have nothing to do with the intellectual and moral backruptcy of Leninist-Stalinism, social democracy is going through a serious crisis of confidence and even of identity. Its basic formula — capitalism in the production of wealth, socialism in its distribution — encountered difficulties the moment the industrial world entered its present crisis. Forced to harden its line (Sweden, England) or to "fade out" (West Germany), it has no longer succeeded in realizing the consensus of enlightened minds that it knew in the 60s in Europe, France excepted: this is what Pierre Rosanvallon has called the crisis of the Welfare state. It was already known for a long time that as a redistribution mechanism, the system of social taxes was unwieldy, ineffective and even counter-productive. During periods of stagnation or recession, it is subject to the same suspicions as all insurance systems: that of redistributing less than it collects and, in the final analysis, of grinding mere wind.

*The Triple Formula Faces the Test of Power*

It was in this difficult context that French socialism came to power. Its great objectives were summed up in the triple formula: "nationalization, planning, self-management" — a sort of Left variant of social-democracy, which the CFDT had been the first to conceive and the Socialist Party had later picked up. Where do we stand now? It was, of course, the nationalizations which were the priority of the new administration. Based on previous experiences, the Right and the business world were convinced that the Left would not apply this portion of its program. They had forgotten that the new Socialist Party was based precisely on the break with the old SFIO and its custom of not keeping its promises once it had won power. In any event, the new institutional framework of the Fifth Republic and the wide margin of the legislative victory

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— not to speak of the Communists' vigilance — prohibited all hesitations. Why nationalize? "To build socialism," it used to be said. In 1981, the declared motive was instead "to stimulate the industrial apparatus and fight unemployment." It is too early to tell whether this second goal will be reached. Since France is continuing to play according to the rules of international competition, it is difficult to see how the nationalized firms can escape the constraints which weigh on private enterprise. What is certain, on the other hand, is that the nationalized firms have not been conceived up to now as the socialization of the instruments of production, as had been hoped. They have not yet become the theater of any original social initiatives which give the workers any sense of participating in management. It would seem as though, after having made the nationalizations into an emblem of transition to socialism, the state is embarrassed to put them to any real use.

The same is even truer of planning. In the light of the recent political context, one may ask whether the government has lost interest in planning because Michel Rocard is Minister of the Plan, or whether Rocard was given that position because the government had lost interest in it. The current situation is not without its ironic side, since it appears to be a replay of the Socialist Congress of Metz (1979), only with the tendencies reversed.[15] In any event, the Socialist government in no way considers the Plan an urgent problem, a "burning obligation" as it used to be called. Rather than an instrument of anticipation, the plan today seems to be more of an accompanying exercise, a vehicle for dusting off the track to make way for the government's economic policies. Aside from the immediate circumstances which may explain this situation, it must be admitted that the very notion of planning is undergoing a serious crisis in socialist thinking. Either the plan is indeed constraining, and thus, apparently, useful above all in organizing scarcity, or else it is based on the principle of incitement[16] and therefore appears somewhat superfluous. Between pompous structural measures (nationalizations) and the short-term navigation imposed by the dire economic situation, there seems to be no place for an ambitious and selective industrial policy. True, Jean-Pierre Clevènement (ex-Minister of Research and Industry) does not hide his industrializing convictions. But he seems to be aspiring to turn France into the Japan of the public sector rather than the laborataory of a new type of growth. Yet, the question must be posed: does the rehabitation of profit in the framework of nationalized industry suffice to define a socialist economy?

As for self-management, it is in disrepair — almost as if its death warrant had been signed on May 10, 1981; or, at best as if it had fallen into a prolonged torpor. One may speak of a self-management *process* when the solution of problems gradually replaces the designation of political leaders as the dis-

15. It is indeed ironic to observe Rocard's defense of planning now that he is in charge of composing the Plan. Prior to 1981, his tendency of the Socialist Party distinguished itself from rivals — in particular the CERES (Chevènement, Motchane, etc.) by warning against the dangers of central planning. — Translator's note.

16. Not to be confused with "incentives." The author seems to be talking simply about non-directive or indicative planning. — Translator's note.

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tinguishing emblem of democracy. The multiplying of levels of consultation and participation is an indispensable form of transition from "governed democracy" to "governing democracy." We are still far short of that goal. It is understandable that those socialists who had given mere lip service to the idea of self-management are silent about it today. But what about the others? Let us be clear: self-management was for one tendency of socialism what nationalization was for another: an excellent means of marking off ideological boundaries; but its real importance declined rapidly the closer the socialists came to taking power. What weighs heaviest in the current experience of Left government are not the reform measures taken — though some of them are excellent — but the weak inclination of the government to involve the "people of the Left" . . . and people in general. The public hoots or applauds as the case may be, but it is never tempted to run up on state.

*Profession: Partner*

In the absence of sufficient popular participation, the government must conduct its dialogue with the labor unions. The profession of "social partner" (such a horrible expression, with such a pro-management ring to it!) has become a full-time job, like "certified public accountant" or "plumber." I personally have no complaint about this, but I speak only for myself. I do believe, however, that in the long term, without a popular relay, such an institutionalization will turn into a trap for the unions: the trap of becoming incorporated, body and soul, into the shadow theater of representative democracy. Trade unions are no longer delegates; they have become representatives: do you catch the difference? The first see what they gain in personal status; the second forget what they lose in originality and in real power. (See the Auroux Laws, many of whose provisions are nonetheless very important, and constitute one of the most significant reforms credited to the Left government.) But the government has no interest in turning the unionists into accomplices or theatrical confidants.

Let us feel sorry for the unions: their official representativity has been granted just at a time when their membership is declining. This is a worrisome situation for anyone attached to socialism — all the more so for the type of socialism which I stubbornly insist on calling self-management. At this point, let me stop a moment and imagine the chuckles of my Right-leaning readers ("We told you so!") and the shoulder-shrugs of my Left-leaning readers ("Is now the time to bring this up?"). My reply is that the only real lucidity is the kind which is inopportune and direct at oneself. Lucidity against others is merely intelligence. It is best not to leave the monopoly of freedom of thought to public jesters. The time has come to talk again. Some claim that if the Socialist Party is not stimulating discussion in its ranks, it is because there are more urgent things to do. All right, then: let us talk softly, off to one side. But it would be a shame if the victory of May 20, 1981 liquidated the question of socialism in France the way George Marchais liquidated the dictatorship of the proletariat. I am very happy that the victory of the Socialist Party has

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done away with the practice of debates whose main function was to mark off boundaries; rendered obsolete and so-called "break" [from capitalism] rhetoric; and allowed the class struggle to be considered in a less theoretical manner.[17] That is not a regression: it is progress. So, may it continue.

The question which arises today is as follows: given the bloody adventure of Stalinist communism, the current difficulties of social democracy and the stagnation of French socialism as it was being projected in 1980, can socialism today be anything more than a broad, vague concern for reducing inequality, founded on the favorable neutrality of the unions? Or again: how can socialism be built within an economy which is regulated by the market and which accepts profit, that is, the remuneration of capital? If one concludes that socialism, in a developed country like France, must accomodate itself to a mixed economy, accepting and organizing the coexistence of a private sector, a public sector and various co-operative and associative sectors, is it not then time to proclaim that there is no such thing as a socialist mode of production, strictly speaking, but rather a socialist intervention in diverse modes of production and consumption? Socialism is not — as we have comfortably assumed for too long — a "different logic" which can abolish the force of gravity and transport us, as if by miracle, into the enchanted realm of non-Euclidean politics. It is not, or should no longer be, a discourse on the desirable, but rather an engagement based on the real. Even if we try to ignore this lesson, Mitterrand is henceforth being paid to keep it in mind.

17. Communist Party rank-and-filers learned of this change in party doctrine along with the rest of the French public when Marchais announced it on television in 1976. No intra-party debate preceded the decision. — Translator's note.

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# THE NEW FRENCH SOCIALIST PARTY AND LEFT UNITY*

## by Hughes Portelli

The French Socialist Party (PS) is a unique political phenomenon in the European Left. While it has certain traits in common with other socialist parties of Southern Europe (competition with a Communist Party, lack of strong ties to trade unions), it has followed its own course since 1971 by pursuing Left unity and advocating a radical plan for structural reforms. Its success in the presidential and legislative elections of 1981 and its hegemonic position with the Left have, in combination with the Fifth Republic institutional framework, put the PS in position to implement its program and govern without electoral constraints for at least five years. The French Left now has more power than ever before in its history, which in turn obliges it to play according to rules alien to its experience.

The new Socialist Party, which came into being in 1971 at Epinay-sur-Seine, inherited a dual legacy: that of the French labor movement and that of the old socialist party, the SFIO (Workers' International: French Section). It was SFIO's rapid decline between 1945 and 1969 that necessitated the establishment of the PS on totally new foundations. What are the essential elements of this legacy? In a country like France, where the labor movement is marked by a revolutionary syndicalist tradition (anarcho-syndicalism, anti-parliamentarism, apoliticism) and by a rejection of organic ties with a Socialist Party composed of notables even in its early years, a reformist praxis of the social-democratic or laborite type was ruled out from the beginning. Social-democracy rests on a capacity for social dissuasion (through monopolized representation and leadership of the working class) always denied the SFIO. Revolutionary syndicalism cut the SFIO off from the workers in the first years, and the emergence of the Communist Party (PCF) in 1921, which planted firm roots in the working class, brought to naught the slow work of rapprochement with the General Confederation of Labor (CGT).

Between 1945 and 1947 the situation deteriorated rapidly. The PCF's rise to dominance on the Left, the socialists' decline at the polls, and the birth of Workers' Strength (FO) in a schism with the CGT over the issue of trade union political autonomy, all undercut the SFIO's brokerage power. Condemned by cold-war anti-communism and constitutional disputes with the Gaullist RPF to a "third force" strategy (an alliance excluding the PCF on the Left and RPF on the Right), the SFIO participated in implementing the structural reforms elaborated in 1945-46. In so doing, it contributed to establishing a

*Translated by David J. Parent and Richard Shryock.



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pattern of social change in France: a brief period of far-reaching reforms (nationalizations) followed by a long period of "digestion" of these reforms. Although in a position of relative strength when it came to power in 1956, the SFIO Mollet government could not put through any reforms of significance. On the contrary, the SFIO succumbed to the regime's ideological and political weight to the point of becoming identified with its failings (colonialism, party government, etc.).

Only at the local level did the SFIO successfully promote a "municipal socialism," articulated around social and educational organizations (the Leo Lagrange Federation) and municipal public services. This tradition remained marginal, however, as a result of the lack of real power at the local level and the progressive decline of national socialist influence. Only in the North did the SFIO maintain a populist tradition, as "municipal socialism" (in the form of socialist mayoralities) degenerated elsewhere into clientelism in the tradition of the Radical Party.

How can the SFIO's failure be explained? Many factors contributed: 1) The party's cultural inability to comprehend the evolution of French society. The continuing reference to the Guesde workerist discourse blocked any serious self-reflection and led to condemnation of the revisionism of Blum in 1946 or Mendès-France in 1954; 2) The defensive ideological stance on the international and institutional planes caused the SFIO to veer Right, to enter into alliances with conservative parties and abandon its own program for one based on laicity, Atlanticism and parliamentarism; and 3) A sociological evolution toward a clientele composed of civil servants and declining groups (an electorate mostly South of the Loire, increasingly older and recruited from traditional sectors) led the SFIO to eschew radicalism, thus contributing to its own decline.

The end result was a bolstering of the PCF (also unadapted to the evolution of French society but still serving a tribune function) and abandonment of any reforming role to other political groups, e.g. followers of Mendès-France or De Gaulle. The SFIO thus became an anachronism, whose disappearance from the political scene became inevitable, coming finally with the electoral collapse in the 1969 presidential elections. It was within this historical context that Mitterrand's Socialist Party came into being. The PS sought to be a new party not only better adapted to the postwar transformations of French society, but also determined to sever all links with a SFIO hated by all those who joined the new party between 1971 and 1975 and who constituted its militant base.

*The Roots of Socialist Neo-Reformism*

The contradictory nature of socialist reformism since 1971 is intimately related to the SFIO's impotence in the Fourth Republic. The SFIO, symbolizing reformist opportunism and political impotence which had to be overcome, served as an anti-model for the new generations of the non-Communist Left.

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*Rejection of Reformist Opportunism.* For the intellectual youth politicized by the Algerian war, Molletism was the source of colonial wars (Suez, Algeria) and an unconditional alliance with conservatism which stemmed from an anti-communism increasingly less understood as Cold War reflexes became blurred in the 1960s. The new militants found it incomprehensible that the SFIO could unconditionally support De Gaulle in 1958 only to rally the anti-Gaullist Right in the famous 1962 "Cartel des Non" and support the parliamentarian candidacy of Alain Poher in 1969. This rejection of an incomprehensible opportunism explains certain traits of the non-Communist Left that regrouped outside the SFIO (or on its fringes) in the 1960s. In place of "national socialism," a Third-Worldist ideology was adopted, generating much passion around the myths of "national liberation movements" (Cuba, Vietnam). Visceral anti-communism gave way to unity of action with a party acknowledged as Stalinist, but perceived as the lynchpin of the Left (despite its failings, the PCF continually fascinated reformist intellectuals as the "party of the working class" or the "revolutionary" party) and as reformable. Instead of seriously examining the reasons behind the SFIO's anti-communism, many simply believed that the SFIO's anti-communism and the PCF's political isolation explained the communists' sectarianism and even its Stalinism in the 1950s. The solution, then, was to practice unity of action which would progressively transform the PCF into a democratic party. These two themes — Third Worldism and unity of action with the PCF — would figure prominently in the programs of the new party constituted at Epinary in 1971.

*Renewal of Socialist Thought.* The will to break with SFIO was no less strong in he ideological realm. The new generation of militants that took hold of the PS after 1971 was hardly homogeneous, but did have one common trait: the desire for a renewal of socialist thought or even a return to origins. The dissemination of neo-Marxist (Marcuse, Italian Communism) or self-management themes in the 1960s would leave a strong imprint on the PS. In this period, notwithstanding the contrary impression imparted by the May 1968 movement, Marxism exerted a considerable influence on young intellectuals. Also at this time, in the course of the modernizing wave within the Catholic Church and the dialogue between Marxists and Christians, a current of Marxist-leaning Christians developed among Catholic militants. Under the influence of Third-Worldism and Maoism, a Marxian discourse was disseminated in this period, with Althusser and Garaudy considered the leading thinkers. This spread of Marxism among young intellectuals was not halted by the spontaneous outburst of May 1968 with its libertarian overtones, since the PS did not recruit the majority of its cadres from here but rather from those who had been drawn to Marxism when at its peak. It is thus understandable that for these new generations of militants a critique of the SFIO on the ideological level was translated into a belief in the utility of a return to socialist origins. Thus, yesterday's watered-down program was to be countered by an intransigent policy based on planning and nationalizations, unity of underpriviledged classes, and anti-Americanism. On all these points, however, the

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PCF had a long standing, well-honed position. Thus, when many militants took the step of breaking with the SFIO, they not surprisingly, albeit with certain reservations, adopted an ideology framed by the PCF.

*The Role of the "New Working Class."* Critique of reformist opportunism and an ideological toughening soon encountered some limits. The first such limit is linked to the very nature of the political project of the New Left, whether those close to Mitterrand or to the modernist wing of the Unified Socialist Party (PSU). The common objective was to base the party on the educated and wage-earning "new strata" from which the New Left drew its influence. It was to this group that the New Left attempted to appeal with an outlook overcoming the limits of "workerism" and thus avoiding the trap of addressing these groups as "middle class." The new party was to be founded among these groups, with a self-management approach designed to seduce these intermediary categories who had no real power or responsibility at work. The "theoretical" approach was being prepared in the 1960s: the analysis, imported from Italy, of advanced capitalism, or "neo-capitalism," put great emphasis on the groups generated by capitalism's evolution, i.e., engineers, technicians, researchers, etc. The term "new working class" encompassed both these new categories and the most recent strata of the industrial proletariat (O.S.). Among non-communist Marxists, a questioning of the utility of Marx in defining this new social reality and the classification of these groups as working class or something else animated debate. This was the nature of the debate between communist theoreticians, on one side, and Serge Mallet, Roger Garaudy or André Gorz, on the other, in the 1960s, or between communists and Nicos Poulantzas in the early 1970s. This necessary revisionism was relatively masked (as had been that of the early 1900s) but spurred on by the influence of an intellectual pole (around Alain Touraine) that openly advocated that the new strata place itself in the vanguard of social and political struggles. This revisionism is all the more important because it broke from traditional Left discourse: the SFIO itself had always refused to re-examine the Marxist credo as to the centrality of the working class. Basing, more or less, a strategy for social change on an appeal to groups other than the industrial proletariat thus constituted a decisive turn from the workerism dominant since 1848.

*Acceptance of the Fifth Republic.* We can speak of a reformist revision in another way: most of the theoreticians and political leaders of the New Left refused to follow those who wanted to change the social vanguard while simultaneously retaining the primacy of revolution. Such reformism was most apparent in the political sphere, e.g., in the gradualism of "revolutionary reformism" (structural reforms) which asserted that it cannot be determined immediately after the implementation of a reform whether or not it will effect a break with the "capitalist system." Even greater reformism came out in the elevation of the principle of democratic alternation in power; this was the *sine qua non* condition of Left unity and the Left pledged to respect it in the 1972 Common Program. It is the progressive acceptance of the Fifth Republic, however, that

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best illustrates the limits of revolutionary rhetoric. First, acceptance of the Fifth Republic meant an end to the Left's stress on a parliamentary regime. Over the past century, the Left had opposed a presidential regime not only as a form of Caesarism but also as counter to the parliamentary system, in turn a watered-down version of the convention system that constituted the institutional model of French socialism (as evidenced by the 1945 Socialist-Communist constitutional proposal).The abandonment of such references and the rallying to the Gaullist regime had several important consequences: 1) the election of a president would favor the non-communist Left and create the conditions for a regrouping of forces around a charismatic leader (a role Mitterrand would assume); and 2) the electoral system (especially the two-ballot single member district and the 5% rule) would, in addition to eliminating small parties, also work in favor of the non-communist Left, encouraging communist electors to "vote constructively" (for Left candidates who might win). In addition to these electoral considerations, the institutions of the Fifth Republic, which affirmed the primacy of state power and the hegemony of the administrative technocracy (coincidentally at a time when the first class of the National School for Administration, ENA, was about to graduate, i.e., the late 1950s), forced the Left to reconcile itself with a state apparatus — all-powerful, autonomous, and itself a major pressure group — one it had accepted the Fifth Republic rules. The most evident risk was that the state technocracy would attempt the same takeover of the non-communist Left that it had pulled off with liberalism and Gaullism in the past. In fact, this operation was carried out with relative success in the 1970s. In the final analysis, in its acceptance of the Fifth Republic, the French Left proved much more moderate in the institutional domain than its European partners, even if its desire to break the SFIO praxis had led it to voice a maximalist position in the economic and social domains that other social-democrats had long since renounced.

*Socialist Program and Economic Realism.* The acceptance of strong state power (even if qualified by proposals to amend the constitution, whose scope narrowed from 1965 to 1981) and institutional arrangements antithetical to traditional socialist conceptions is only one facet of the political revisionism of the socialist New Left. The second facet, inherited from the Mendesism of the 1950s, is the constant reference to down-to-earth realism. The propositions put forward by the Left, while linked to a political project, in this view must be placed within a carefully laid-out timetable (thus references to a program and planning) and presented in such a way so as to counter traditional charges against the Left of economic and financial incompetence. This insistence on the importance of the economy and on the problem of constraints (a theme developed in the 1960s) was omnipresent on the socialist Left: it can be seen, e.g., not only in the debates of the *Club Jean Moulin* or the *Rencontres socialistes de Grenoble* (1966) but also in the first CERES (Center for Socialist Education and Research, the PS Left wing) colloquium held in 1968 on industrial policy. This theme is related to two traditions that were not well integrated within the

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SFIO: 1) planning, which was ignored during the Popular Front era (especially as the planning current with the SFIO in 1936 was closer to Belgian socialist Henri de Man than to the American New Dealers) and gradually forgotten after 1947, and 2) the appeal for "technical competence," which was promoted by isolated currents within the SFIO (notably Jules Moch). The idea of confining the "transition to socialism" within a well-articulated program corresponds not only to a preoccupation with "serious" politics and to the Mendesist aim to establish a *contract* between the Left and its electors but also to a certain tactical imperative. Once the socialists accepted the idea of an alliance with the communists, it became indispensible to fix the terms of that alliance clearly and to delimit the direction in which the Left intended to move together. Once this is understood, it becomes clear why the relation of the PCF and the socialist Left between 1965 and 1981 was tied to a series of programs and platforms whose signature laid out not only the existing points of accord or disagreement but also the threshold (vis à vis foreign policy, nationalizations, institutions, etc.) beyond which the socialists would not go. This public debate over a program should not be seen as somehow politically neutral in its implications. The socialists placed it continually on an ideological basis, forcing the communists each time to move closer to the socialists' liberal conception of democracy: democratic alternation in power, loyalty to the Atlantic Alliance, acceptance of a united Europe, etc. Moreover, the willingness to leave intact the powers of the President (for example, the right to dissolve parliament or the preeminence of the executive over the government) proved to be the acid test as to the communists' good will.

*The Mandate of Epinay: Myths and Realities*

These ideological and political premises upon which the new Socialist Party based its effort to rebuild from 1971 to 1981 were consistently adhered to. The conditions under which the effort was undertaken in 1971 guaranteed that. What then came out of the Epinay congress?

*The Victory of Francois Mitterrand.* Mitterrand's victory over Guy Mollet at the Epinay congress was the result of the conjunction of two pressing needs. The first was the goal of preserving the last bastions of the SFIO (the North under the leadership of Pierre Mauroy and Provence under Gaston Defferre) while simultaneously providing a moribund party with a new élan. The slow decline of the SFIO had taken a catastrophic turn after 1962, symbolized by the disasterous showing in the 1969 presidential elections (when Defferre received only 6% of the vote). In 1970-71, despite the promotion of Alain Savary to party leadership (though still seen as under Guy Mollet's control), the decline did not abate, as evidenced by the success of Radical Party rival Jean-Jacques Servain-Schreiber in an interim election. In order to halt this hemorrhage, the SFIO moderates called on Mitterrand as the charismatic leader of the left (then head of the grouping of political clubs, the *Convention des Institutions Républicaines*), reasoning that his project for Left unity was less dangerous than that of Guy Mollet. While Mollet proposed an ideological debate with the PCF,

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Mitterrand advocated a governmental program that would protect the specificity of each party and would be valid only for the duration of the five year legislative term. The second was Mitterrand's goal of molding the new party to the institutions of the Fifth Republic. Having learned from the examples provided by the Gaullists, d'Estaing and Sevain-Schreiber, Mitterrand firmly believed that the socialist Left could be brought together by means of a common Left candidate in the presidential elections. He stated his objective clearly: it was necessary to reconstitute a socialist pole that would at first re-equilibriate the Left (counter balance the PCF), then become hegemonic within the Left, and finally gain enough weight to govern alone.[1] This strategy could not help but please all those remaining in the SFIO (or what was left of it) who dreamed of regaining the party's former electoral strength. As for the party's program, Mitterrand perceived it in the image of the aforementioned debates of the 1960s: the economic and social program had to be unequivocably anchored to the Left (in order to reconquer the electorate lost to the PCF), while its institutional program had to reinforce liberal democracy (in order to win over the Center-Left electorate). Finally, Mitterrand emphasized that, given the reality of the PCF's international ties, Left unity could only work with a framework of détente and not Cold War. This strategy would be implemented through adept utilization of the Fifth Republic's electoral system and mode of presidential election. This certitude explains the vigorous confrontation that preceded Mitterrand's victory over institutional questions. The Mitterrand-Mollet conflict, putting aside the issue of party loyalty, was in effect the confrontation of two logics — one presidential, the other parliamentary — as was its parallel on the Right (the conflict between Giscard d'Estaing and Antoine Pinay).

*The Social Bases of the New PS.* The nature of the party that would come into being removed any ambiguity as to its orientation. Notwithstanding a workerist discourse designated to help the PS compete with the PCF (which explains, too, the assigning of the youth section and the workplace section to the Marxist-leaning CERES), the PS adopted an essentially electoralist praxis. While the different motions presented at the congress stressed the necessity to forge a working-class base, the cultural predisposition of the party proved stronger: the majority of the PS refused to promote workplace sections at the expense of local territorial sections, calling instead for the creation of "socialist groups at the workplace" (*groupes socialistes d'entreprise*) rather than full-fledged workplace organs (*sections d'enterprise*) with voting powers. Moreover, like the clubs in the 1960s, the PS would sink its roots in what would be called, for the sake of simplicity, the "wage-earning middle classes." A poll taken in 1973 showed that the PS was composed of only 15% workers and 14% white-collar employees (coming essentially from the public sector and recruited from the most highly skilled groups) but 13% lower-level supervisory personnel and 14% executives or professionals. In the last two categories, the vast

1. Francois Mitterrand, *Ma part de vérité* (Paris: Fayard, 1969).

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majority were teachers — 13% of total party membership, coming mostly from the secondary and university systems. The numbers are all the more telling in the upper reaches of the party, where a socio-cultural elitism reigns. The parliamentary delegation in 1981 (and also in 1978) is only 1% working class, as is the *Comité directeur*; top-level supervisory personnel/executives and professionals make up 80%. A paradox thus exists: the working-class nature of the socialist electorate (albeit, itself very diversified) is not reflected at the level of the party itself, either its militants or apparatus, which instead is the preserve of salaried and educated middle class strata, teachers and civil servants ( with those graduating from ENA playing a leading role). This type of recruitment is not without consequences with respect to the PS mode of operation. The party continues to be an electoral machine whose membership grows very slowly in spite of major electoral advances, including the extraordinary gains of May-June 1981. The party membership has grown from 60,000 in 1971 to just over 200,000 ten years later. Moreover, a considerable number of these party members are elected local representatives (now 30% of party membership), with major increases being recorded after the 1976 cantonal elections and the 1977 municipal elections.

Finally, party members preoccupied with electoral and ideological battles accord only secondary importance to trade unionism. Few union officials find leading roles in a party whose social base and culture is alien to their experience. Moreover, the PS cannot count on union support, as PS members are divided among the CGT, FO, the CFDT, and FEN (the teachers' confederation). If one leaves aside the case of FEN (an essentially corporatist union), the unions' influence on PS militants is more negative than positive: socialists do not disseminate a single project within the world of labor but rather different union discourses confront each other within the party, whether that be the CGT's proto-communist, the FO's laic and reformist, or the CFDT's modernist and self-management orientation.

*Pluralism and Unity in the PS.* Given its socio-cultural roots, the PS's need for some sort of charismatic unity is not surpising. In order to bring together militants who, while coming from similar social milieus, had often followed quite different political itineraries and belonged to contradictory political cultures (Christian, Marxist and laic), Mitterrand had little choice but to structure the party on a presidential basis and on the promise of the conquest of power. It was not difficult to infuse this presidential spirit into the party or its various currents. The end result was an oligarchic and centralized *esprit* in the image of the Fifth Republic, which was only attenuated by the pluralism of personal ambitions and sub-cultures (structured in party currents/factions). The credence given the promise of an eventual conquest of power, bolstered by successive victories in local elections and growing strength in legislative and presidential elections, explains the continual authority of Mitterrand and his supporters within the party. Significantly, this authority came into question, with the 1979-80 challenge of Michel Rocard to succeed Mitterrand, only when many militants and, more importantly, elected officials began to

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lose faith in the imminent fulfillment of that promise.

*The PS's Doctrine.* The true nature of reformist ideology in the 1970s and early 1980s must be understood in relation to this conception of the party and its political project. Consistent with doctrinal elaborations of the 1960s, the PS constructed a discourse that incorporated two seemingly contradictory imperatives: 1) to legitimate ideologically the political and social project put forward by the PS, and 2) to create the largest possible social base for the party. The PS, composed of a great many intellectuals and university graduates, spent much of its time while in oppositon engaging in theoretical and doctrinal debates between electoral campaigns. Ideology served the PS on two levels: 1) vis à vis the outside, ideological elaboration leading toward a "*projet de société*" helped to define both the party itself and its clientele; and 2) within the party, the ideological nature of the political debate forced each party faction to develop a theoretical arsenal in order to justify its position and even its existence. The Rocardian faction thus developed a discourse on the "two cultures" — one autogestionnaire (i.e., the Rocardians themselves) and the other jacobin-statist — that divided the party; the CERES, for its part, spoke out against the "American Left" (i.e., the Rocardians) that was the counterpart within the PS of the "American Right" represented by Giscard. In order to broaden PS recruitment, a pragmatic Mitterrand opted for a doctrine that would facilitate party action and thus remain relatively fluid and adaptable. The party's class base was thus defined as a "class front" which allowed salaried, non-manual workers to consider themselves as exploited and proletarian on an equal basis with the traditional working class. Such was also the case with self-management, adopted in 1975 as the party's official ideological stance but without any real application in practice (aside from a few limited experiments at the municipal level). Did not *autogestion* provide the PS with a doctrine differentiated from that of the PCF and thus reinforce its autonomy? Did it not serve to reconcile the aspirations of workers and various supervisory personnel? It is thus easy to see why such ideological references remained highly ambiguous and why certain themes (*autogestion*) have been abandoned almost completely since 1981. These ideological debates cannot be viewed solely as a battle between the Right and Left within the PS. Certainly, most party notables consistently pushed in the direction of programmatic "realism" and moderation. Yet, such notables could be found in all party factions. Moreover, a faction on the "Left" on one question could often be found on the "Right" on another. For example, the CERES, firm partisans of Left unity, also advocated a nationalist "historic compromise" with the Gaullists. The Rocardians, proponents of self-management, are also visceral anti-communists. It was thus incumbent upon Mitterrand to come up with the lowest common denominator between party factions as a function of tactical necessities and electoral objectives at any given point in time.

*Nature of the Socialist Project.* How then can we situate the "socialist project" that served as the distant basis of the electoral platform of the socialist can-

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didate in the 1981 presidential elections?[2] It should be pointed out, first of all, that this document served both as an ideological war-machine designed to block the route of Mitterrand's rival, Rocard, for the PS presidential nomination, and as a means to counter the PCF's charges of the PS "turn to the right" following the 1977 rupture of Left unity. Notwithstanding these tactical considerations (brilliantly successful), the grand axes of Mitterrandist reformism, now being put to the test of power, can also be discerned in this electoral program: 1) an effort to balance socialist economic reforms and liberal political reforms; 2) a desire to extend to the departmental and regional level the methods and control of municipal socialism by means of reforms on decentralization; and 3) an attempt to provide French socialism with a lever of power, always lacking in the past, through use of the state apparatus. The socialists were forced to explore roads other than the social-democratic as they lacked the trade union support capable of serving as a force of dissuasion in its relations with the *patronat* (the French employers) and conservative forces (this was due to the aforementioned weight of the PCF among the working class and the "autonomous" tradition of the trade unions). The solution appeared to be basing the party on a third force — state power, augmented by the very nature of the Fifth Republic — that could be strengthened in the economic domain through measures that would concurrently weaken the power of employers, i.e., nationalizations. The extension of the public sector and the practice of a spoils system within the administration worked in this direction. With effective control of the bureaucracy, a major part of the economy, and local power-centers, the PS would thus be in a position to implement a reformist socialism in France on a totally original basis.

For the moment, the problems that the PS encounters have not yet been successfully resolved. First, as an organization well-adapted to electoral battles, the PS must become a "governmental party" after ten years in opposition. This entails forging an organic link between the government and its electorate. In addition, the PS cannot content itself with "applying its program" of the 1970s, inevitably modified through experience in power, but must also lay out a socialist project for the 1990s. Second, because it is now hegemonic on the Left, the PS must come up with a platform that will retain the loyalty of the electorate conquered from the PCF and from the Right. The risks of segmentation or of becoming a catch-all party are obvious. Third, once the nationalization program is finally implemented, the PS will have to answer very real questions: Can a Keynesian policy work in today's world? What will be the nature and role of "democratic planning?" Can autogestion be limited to the granting of some workers' rights at the workplace? With respect to al these questions, to which the PS did not respond before 1981, the answers are all the more uncertain given the risk that the PS (due to its structural weakness) will be subject to interest group pressure, and given the inevitable political recomposition of the party brought on by the experience in power.

2. Parti Socialiste, *Project socialiste: pour la France des années 80* (Paris: Club socialiste du livre, 1981).

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# THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY IN THE 1970s*

## by Bruno Bongiovanni

If in the irreplaceable bibliographies compiled in the 1960s concerning the Italian and the German Communist parties the chronological period under examination (respectively 1921-1926 and 1918-1933) is perfectly plausible, the periodization of the equally useful and exhaustive work on the French Communist Party (1920-1939) is in need of some clarification.[1] While the Italian and the German Communist Parties were outlawed and forced to operate underground with the coming to power of two totalitarian party-regimes, the French Communist Party was dissolved by the Daladier government only in 1939. As is well-known, after the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and the beginning of the war, the party was outlawed even though it had voted for war credits Sept. 2.

Yet, in 1940, during the German occupation, the communist lawyer Foissin, trusted man of the Soviets in France, repeatedly requested Otto Abitz, the emissary of the German Foreign Ministry, to allow the legal publication of *Humanité*. Thus, it is understandable why for a long time the PCF avoided discussing the 1939-1941 period. Under the pseudonym A. Rossi, Angelo Tasca raised this burning question towards the end of the 1940s and at the beginning of the 1950s with a series of articles culminating in the reprinting of the practically irretrievable issue of *Cahiers du Bolshevisme* of 1939-1940 which contained, among other things, Molotov's speech dropped in the form of fliers by the Third Reich's airplanes on the Parisian workers' suburbs. Tasca even suggested that this issue had been printed in Nazi Germany, at that time allied to the USSR.[2] He ruled out any autonomy to the PCF: the party was seen as nothing more than one of the many pawns of Soviet expansionism. This was a typical attitude during the 1950s, when Stalinism was explained in terms of the Soviet Union alone as responsible for everything in the world communist movement. Efforts to understand the USSR's social nature rendered secondary the "national" reasons for the various community parties' policies and even for the communists' massive international support of Soviet Stalinism. The Cold War climate, of course, facilitated the spread of the not unjustified thesis of Soviet expansionism and obsession with "the international communist conspiracy."

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1. See, respectively, Stefano Merli, "Il Partito Comunista Italiano 1921-1926," in *Annali Feltrinelli*, Vol. III (1960), pp. 656-739; *Die Kommunistishce Partei Deutschlands 1918-1933. Ein bibliographischer Beitrag*, Enzo Collotti, ed. (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1961); and Giorgio Rovida, "Le Parti communiste français 1920-1939," in *Annali Feltrinelli*, Vol. IX (1967), pp. 169-324.

2. A. Rossi, "Avant-propos" to *Les Cahiers du Bolshevisme pendant la compagne 1939-1940* (Paris: Wapler, 1951), pp. VII-IXXII.



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Because the PCF had always been active during the whole history of the international communist movement, it had been at the center of great disputes concerning the nature of communism itself. Yet, as late as the 1960s little was available on the matter with the exception of a brilliant special issue of *Crapoillot*, full of denunciations, and an apologetic manual published by the PCF itself.[3] As for the accurate study by Fauvet,[4] *Le Monde*'s director, it was a remarkable step forward. Yet, the author uncritically took democratic values as the standards to evaluate the PCF, thus remaining within the predominant ideological horizon. If one considers that only in 1967 (the year when the bibliography concerning the PCF was published by the Instituto Feltrinelli) the French communist, after having always denied it even in court, admitted in an anonymous work to having asked German authorities in the summer of 1940 about printing *Humanité*[5] legally — which in the meantime was being published underground, but without ever mentioning the fact that France was occupied by the Nazis[6] — one can understand the difficulties encountered by a more extensive historical investigation.

A recent study based on the Daladier archives[7] indicates how things have improved, This study attempts to reconstruct the *internal* reasons of the PCF's behavior, independently of the *diktat* of Soviet foreign policy or parallel impositions by the International. Its focus is on a reading of 1939 through the outlook of 1914, the strategy of social fascism, the Daladier government's anti-communist repression after September 1939, the war's unfolding, the military defeat, the clever and hitherto unexplored German policy during the first months of the occupation, etc. One must also recall that precisely while their inconclusive negotiations with the Germans dragged on, the communists were accusing of warmongering and imperialism those socialists who accepted some collaboration with the Vichy regime. In fact, Tasca's writings were still part of the diatribe, intensified by the Cold War, between the two working class parties which accused each other of having collaborated with the fascists. Any any rate, the focus on the "internal" political functioning of the PCF is one of the scholarly achievements of the 1970s when a careful study of the party's history finally began.

The years 1968-69 were decisive. As is well known, May '68 found the PCF totally unprepared. In the flood of publications that appeared in the second half of that year, what stood out was the absence of any significant positions by the party or by the CGT. Only in 1972 was an authoritative account, even if an insipid one, finally provided.[8] At any rate, events did not leave much time for

3. See 'Histoire du parti communiste," in *Crapoillot*, 55 (January 1972); and *Histoire du parti communiste français (Manual)* (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1964).

4. Jacques Fauvet, *Histoire du Parti communiste français* (Paris: Fayard, 1964). As for the origins, see Annie Kriegel, *Aux origines du communisme français 1914-1920* (Paris: Mouton, 1964).

5. See *Le Parti communiste français dans la Résistance* (Paris, Editions Sociales, 1967).

6. See *L'Humanité clandestine*, G. Willard, ed. (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1975).

7. See Denis Peschanski, "La demande de parution légale de 'l'Humanité' (June 17, 1940-August 27, 1940)" in *Le Mouvement Social*, No. 113 (October-December 1980), pp. 67-89. For the importance of the contributions of this journal, see the special issue devoted to "Aspects du communisme français," January-March 1971.

8. See Georges Seguy, *Le Mai de la CGT* (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1972).

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reflection. General De Gaulle, after much talk of a Mendès-France government, left for Germany. In Paris, the Right was able to pull a colossal demonstration along the Champs-Elysées, led by Debré and Malraux. At that point, the General set new selections. By the 30th of June, the extent of the Left's defeat became clear: the PCF won only 34 seats while losing 39. On the whole, the Left lost 100 seats. In a very short time, the May-June events had resulted in a glamorous strengthening of the Gaullist majority. The breach opened by May had been immediately closed, but something was clearly taking place in society. In August, the Czech invasion and the abrupt interruption of the Prague Spring again tested the PCF, which protested the Soviet intervention. Such a natural reaction, however, shook many old militants of the Stalinist school such as the widow of the "best" Frenchman, Jeannette Thorez-Vermeerch, who did not hesitate to challenge the majority of the central committee. What became evident once again was the party's cultural and intellectual inability to deal with new events by means of as archaic a framework as the Marxism-Leninism of the 1950s. The PCF was on the defensive. The collective movements were led by figures such as Cohn-Bendit and Dubcek which, although very different, were equally extraneous to the party's traditions.

A late effect, but not a light one, of '68 took place the next year, when 52.2% of the population voted "No" in an electoral competition triggered by that Gaullist institution *par excellence*, the referendum, which ended De Gaulle's political career. New presidential elections thus became necessary. It was a major catastrophe for the Left. Within this context, however, the unchallenged winner was the PCF whose candidate, the 72-year-old Jacques Duclos — an old Stalinist very close to Moscow — obtained the flattering personal success of 21.5% of the votes. The socialist candidate, Marseille's mayor Gaston Defferre, gained only 5.07% of the votes, thus plunging the old party to a low point of no return. In the second electoral ballot,there were no Left candidates in a competition between the Gaullist Right, led by Pompidou, and the Center, led by the president of the Senate, Poher.

These events opened Pompidou's era as well as the tortuous reconstitution of the Left. The Socialist Party practically dissolved itself in the congresses of Alfortville, Issy-les-Moulineaux and Epinay. Mitterrand, however, finally reemerged and succeeded in unifying the struggling factions by outlining a campaign for the unity of the Left, and definitively marginalizing the old leadership tied to Guy Mollet. What came out of Epinay was truly a new and different socialist party, paying attention not only to the particular mechanisms of the political system of the Fifth Republic, but also to the new persistent and irrepressible noises from within civil society.

The PCF was apparently satisfied with Duclos'success. It intensified the polemic with the *gauchistes-casseurs* and toned down, to the point of silencing, criticism of the USSR concerning the Czech affair. In February 1970 the XIX party Congress took place at Nanterre: the new developments within the socialist party were noticed, yet Garaudy was purged for demanding more

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decisiveness in posing the question of the party's independence from Moscow. Furthermore, with the lingering of Waldeck Rochet's sickness, a new personality with an obscure past emerged as the party's number one man: Georges Marchais. He had joined the party in 1947 and had not shared with the leading elite the heroic years nor the period of anti-German resistance. Rather, during the war, he had worked in Germany for the *Service du Travail Obligatoire.* This fact was to become the source of heated polemics. Yet, Marchais seemed to be a dynamic *apparatchiki* able to pull the party out of the doldroms in which it found itself in 1968-1970. What were lacking were ideal and, most of all, a culture able to make sense out of the present. But one could still flex one's muscles: this was the meaning of Marchais's rise as a surrogate for the party's funadmental deficiences. At the same time, in 1970, not only was the "pluralist" Garaudy purged, but so was the "radical" Tillon.[9] Previously, they had both been fervent Stalinists, but in 1968 they had become attuned to the main events in Prague, and in the Latin Quarter.

It was precisely the communist and anti-Stalinist Left that sought to pose anew the question of the history of the PCF. And it was primarily the Trotskyist movement which, coming out of May stronger than ever, seemed able to fulfill this task. With the continuation of the Vietnam war, the colonial question appeared still as a particularly appropriate starting point. Thus, an extensive anthology mercilessly identified the historical contradictions of the PCF policies on colonial matters — especially the failure of establishing a connection between wage-workers in the mother-country and movements of national liberation. During the two periods of government responsibility, indirectly in 1936 and directly in 1944, the party was seen as implicated in an imperialist policy under the camouflage of anti-colonialist declarations. At the same time, an attempt was made to go back to the roots of the PCF's anti-democratic involution — to that bolshevization that definitively aligned the party to Moscow and inhibited the development of an authentic revolutionary and proletarian democracy.[10] The key in these studies was the Trotskyist concept of "degeneration" which measured everything in terms of a lost original purity. If this approach was problematic in Trotsky's analysis of the USSR, it was even more so when extended to the analyses of communist parties.

1972 was the year of the Common Program.[11] Having boldly come out of Epinay, the Socialist Party was open to a Union of the Left[12] without sidestepping a preliminary, difficult and probably interminable ideological debate with the PCF. The new Socialist Party was an easy-going magma of autoges-

9. Of these figures, see Roger Garaudy, *Pour un modèle français due socialisme* (Paris: Grasset, 1968); and Charles Tillon, *On chantait rouge* (Paris: Laffont, 1977).

10. See, respectively, Jacob Moneta, *Le PCF et la question coloniale (1920-1965)* (Paris: Maspero, 1971); and Jederman, *Le "bolchevisation" du PCF (1923-1928)* (Paris; Maspero, 1971).

11. For the PCF, see *Changer de cap. Programme pour un gouvernement démocratique d'union populaire* (Paris: Editions Scoiales, 1971).

12. See Jacques Poperen, *La gauche française: le nouvel age 1958-65* (Paris: Fayard, 1972) and, by the same author, *L'Unité de la Gauche 1965-1973* (Paris: Fayard, 1975). See also Maco D'Eramo, *Rinascita di un partito. I socialisti francesi* (Cosenza: Lirici, 1976), and Bruno Crimi, *Mitterrand e la svolta francese* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1978).

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tionaire, reformist, and eclectic positions: it was an open party which, much better than in the past, could adjust itself to a changing civil society. At this point the PCF sought to polish itself up a little with Marchais' macho image and a new futuristic headquarter in place Colonel-Fabien, built by the Basel architect Oskar Niemeyer. Such an aggressive and "modernist" image, however, only hid the extent to which the party remained essentially what it was before. At this point it became necessary to be better acquainted with the history of the party and a useful anthology reconstructed the stages of the party between 1920 and 1939.[13] There was nothing new, but the documentation was important. Another brief anthology even provided an electoral geography of the party up to 1936 — the year of its first meaningful showing.[14] The question of intellectuals, of course, always remained central, primarily in relation to the avant garde and literary movements between the two wars.[15] Also interesting is the reconstruction of the breaks which led to the purge of the party's leading figures.[16] With the end of the 1960s — characterized by the *gauchiste* denunciation of the alleged PCF "betrayal" of the revolution, the period of the Common Program was more concerned with the party's historical reality beyond the recent superficial re-varnishing. Even the PCF, in 1972, began examining itself, and in November-December, it published the first issue of the new series of the *Cahiers d'Histoire de l'Institute Maurice Thorez*, devoted to party congresses.

In 1973, the great come back of the French Left began. This, however, was entirely due to the Socialist Party. In the first ballot of the legislative elections the PCF received 21.34% of the vote, the 20.65% for the Union of the Left. (compare this with the 5.07% for Defferre in the presidential elections four years earlier!). In the second ballot the socialists won 89 seats (a gain of 48 with respect to 1968) and the communists 73 (a gain of 39). Even in terms of the particular French electoral system, the socialists, who in the seond ballot reached 23.68% not only re-established a balance of forces within the Left, as Mitterrand had promised in Epinay, but were in the process of becoming its main component. But the Socialist Party's surprising and rapid growth began to bother the PCF which, at that point, launched its brief and not always convincing Eurocommunist phase. Between 1973 and 1975 there were a series of unusually cordial encounters between Italian and French communists, culminating with the great Eurocommunist meeting in Paris in June 3, 1976. The interest generated by this was reflected in Loris Gallico's history of the PCF[17] which, although occasionally reticent, was certainly closer to the PCF than to the Italian Communist Party. Even recollections of past heroic

13. Nicole Racine, Louis Bodin, *Le Parti communiste français pendant l'entre-deux-guerres* (Paris: Colin, 1972).

14. Jean-Paul Brunet, *L'enfance du Parti communiste* (1920-1938) (Paris: PUF, 1972).

15. See Jean-Pierre A. Bernard, *Le parti communiste françcais et la question littéraire 1921-1939* (Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1972).

16. See Louis Couturier, *Les "grandes affaires" du parti communiste français* (Paris: Maspero, 1972.

17. See Loris Gallico, *Storia del partito comunista francese* (Milan; Teti, 1973).

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moments were not missing.[18] But the most important contribution of 1973 was by an American who saw the entire PCF history as a long and troubled march towards an impossible de-bolshevization.[19] Such an objective would have destroyed the Communist Party. In a synthesis which is more of an interpretation than a historical narrative, Tiersky captured the problems and contradictions of the moment. The PCF's inability to confront obstacles and to hold its own with a less "militant" party such as the socialists, was a result of a too timid and opportunistic revision of old dogma. The nascent Eurocommunism turned out to be another device like Marchais' posturing or the new building in place Colonel-Fabien: a façade to hide the growing obsolescence of a particularly frozen version of Marxism-Leninism. There were also ultra-Left readings which, in polemicizing with the Common Program, attacked the counter-revolutionary nature of both Stalinism and social-democracy — something which certainly could not have been welcomed by PCF apologists.[20]

Some have argued that the 1973 legislative elections came too soon. The trial by fire, however, was provided by Pompidou's premature death precipitating new presidential elections. Unlike on the Right, where Giscard d'Estaing took over as leader in the first ballot from the gaullist Chaban-Delmas, on the Left all went perfectly. Mitterrand was the only Left candidate in both ballots. In this occasion the PCF support was loyal. In the end Mitterrand was closely defeated with 49.33% of the vote — the highest percentage ever received by the Left during the Fifth Republic. This was the moment of the Common Program's greatest cohesion. Moreover, during the PCF's XXI Party Congress, held October 1974, there was talk of scrapping the Union de la Gauche in favor of a Union du Peuple de France — a slogan reminiscent of the just-announced Italian "historical compromise."[21]

French Marxism, which, notwithstanding many efforts,[22] still awaited an exhaustive study, was on the defensive. It finally did perceive new developments and clumsily attempted to fit them *a posteriori* in a by-now worn-out scheme. Even the obsessive search for scientificity, carried out at the beat of *coupures* by a philosopher so conservative to appear innovative such as Althusser (willing to abandon Marx's humanism to "Christians" and "social-democrats") is to be understood within this context. On the other hand, that the PCF was the weakest link in the Union of the Left was well understood even

18. See J. Le Ramey, P. Vottero, *Les mutins de la mer noire* (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1973).

19. Ronald Tiersky, *Le mouvement communiste en France 1920-1972* (Paris: Fayard, 1973), pp. 84-94.

20. See Jean Barrot, Albert Borczuk, Philippe Riviale, *La légende de la gauche au pouvoir. Le Front populaire* (Paris: Tete de Feuilles, 1973).

21. See Marcello Montanari, *Teoria e movimento nel partito comunista francese 1959-1973. Antologia critica* (Bari: De Donato, 1974). The new interest of Italian scholars in the French party often seen as a slightly retarded brother of the Italian Communist Party, can be seen in an anthology of PCF texts which the editor's long and penetrating introduction does not rescue from irreparable mediocrity.

22. See Bruno Schoch, *Marxismus in Frankreich seit 1945* (New York and Frankfurt: Campus, 1980).

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by the Right, which, in the same year, published a fat volume focusing on all the dark sides (and there are very many) of the PCF's history.[23] The book concluded by disemboweling all of the mysterious and occasionally unresolved questions dealing with Marchais' biography before 1947 and his subsequent brilliant political career. In spite of the readily available evidence concerning "internal" Stalinism, for obvious propagandistic reasons, the Right preferred to reintroduce the thesis, not inaccurate but increasingly weak, of dependence from Moscow.

While in 1975 the PCF was in the midst of its Eurocommunist turn, Thorez' biography was published. Written by Robrieux, who was to become the party's most competent historian and who was ex-secretary general of the communist students in 1950-60, it reflected an intimate knowledge of inner party machinery.[24] What was crucial here was that, what the biography also reconstructed was the real and not the mythological history of the party. The picture of the party that transpires is that of an organization profoundly anchored in French traditions, simultaneously working class, populist, jacobin, nationalist, distrustful of the new, internally cohesive, and centralized. The privileged relation with Moscow was meant to proudly uphold the party's national-popular profile. It was not so much a question of dependence as of efficacy and of self-preservation of a model to which Moscow provided external cohesion and continuity.[25]

In January 1976, the PCF held its XXII Congress in Saint-Ouen where Marchais, in the attempt to democratically relaunch a discredited party, successfully proposed eliminating the Leninist notion of "the dictatorship of the proletariat" from the party's statute. If the Socialist Party could not help but applaud the change, within the Communist Party there were considerable "left" criticisms. Particularly interesting were the position of Balibar and Althusser.[26] The latter criticizes the very concept of Union du peuple de France, to which he contraposed a no clearer "Appel aux Masses" which may have been related to what some French intellectuals ridiculed as the GRCPC (read: Grande Revolution Culturelle Broletarienne Chinoise). But then, again, it is well-known that Althusser had traced some Stalinist "deviations" to an excess of humanism and economism.

At any rate, it was clear that all was no longer well between the communist and the socialist parties, and that the former was not going to accept a subaltern position. If the communist historian Claude Willard in a 1976 study of

23. See Roland Gaucher, *Histoire secrête du Parti communiste française* (Paris, Albin Michel, 1974).

24. See Philippe Robrieux, *Thorez. Vie secrète et vie publique* (Paris: Fayard, 1975).

25. For a synthesis of these themes, see my "Movimento Operaio in Francia," in *Il Mondo Contemporaneo. Storia d'Europa 2,* edited by Bruno Bongiovanni, G. Jocteau, N. Tranfaglia (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1980), pp. 615-641, and my "Rivoluzione borghese o rivoluzione del politico?," in *Quaderni di Storia*, 15 (1982).

26. See, respectively, Etienne Balibar, *Sur la dictature du proletariat* (Paris: Maspero, 1976); and Louis Althusser, *22ème Congrès* (Paris: Maspero, 1977). See also Althusser's *Ce qui ne peut plus durer dans le parti communiste* (Paris: Maspero, 1978).

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the attitudes of socialists and communists towards Hitler's rise, placed all the blame for the dissension between the two parties on "the SFIO's sectarianism" without ever mentioning the strategy of social fascism, another PCF anthology was even more revealing.[27] This study analyzed "reformism" in France after 1920, where the socialists were the "reformers" while the communists were the "revolutionaries". Its general framework indicated how the PCF had not changed its views concerning its own past seen as a logical and organic whole: the PCF's virile patience was emphasized during periods of unity, while during breaks, such as the tragic 1939-41 period, the focus shifted on the "reformists' " anti-communist sectarianism. It was as if at the culmination of the Common Program, the PCF sought with this book to reassert its own distinct physiognomy now threatened by the corrupting embrace of the socialists-reformers. This is why the contribution of a socialist scholar, Verdier, was so appropriate in undertaking a fast-moving synthesis of the history of relations between the communist and the socialist parties.[28] According to the author, by 1976 a "competitive alliance" had come into being as a result of the fact that for the first time the two parties had developed a Common Program while seeking to retain their own identity and structure. Repeatedly in the past, e.g., in 1934 and, to a lesser extent, in 1944, the two components had met with the secret hope of healing the wound of Tours and go back to a single party. Thus, it was inevitable that a merciless competition would develop between them since they did not seek organic, but only political, unity. The PCF saw its hegemony within the Left decline and sought to preserve its hegemonic role within the working class.

Precisely when the Left seemed ready to harvest the fruits of an apparently irresistible growth, things collapsed. In fact, the Left had barely won the 1977 municipal elections that the unitary effort evaporated. By then the Socialist Party's superiority was overwhelming. An already planned reconsideration of the Common Program re-opened discussion on everything. At that point, the PCF raised the ante and, through the economist Philippe Herzog, came up with an incredible list of some 10,000 enterprises to be nationalized, thus completely upsetting the earlier agreement. Clearly it had been a matter of finding a pretext to break an alliance within which the PCF did not want to accept a subaltern position. There was no other plausible explanation for this behavior.[29] There were no international turns as in 1939 (the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact) or as in 1947 (the Cold War), when Moscow *diktat* could have precipitated a break with "Western" socialists. It was the PCF itself which chose solitary opposition to a coalition with a stronger ally both more dynamic and more modern.

27. See Claude Willard, "Les réactions *du PC et de la SFIO à* l'arrivée de Hitler au pouvoir," in *Melanges d'histoire sociale offerts à Jean Maitron* (Paris: Les éditions ouvriéres, 1976), pp. 265-274; and Vols. 1 and 2 of *Histoire du réformisme en France depuis 1920* (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1976).

28. See Robert Verdier, *PS-PC une lutte pour l'entente* (Paris: Seghers, 1976).

29. This is how all political commentators see it. See Francois Fejtö, "Le acrobazie di Marchais," in *Mondoperaio,* No. 7/8 (July-August 1981), pp. 91-95.

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Similarly, during this period the experiences of Eastern Europe came increasingly under critical scrutiny primarily within the Left. In 1975, with *La cuisiniere et le mangeur d'hommes*, Glucksmann had launched the "new philosophers"[30] — mostly ex-Marxists anxious to break with their own totalitarian past. The Chinese cultural revolution had began to reveal its true character of a ferocious struggle for power, while the eventual outcome of the Vietnamese revolution, and most of all Cambodia, drowned in bitterness the hopes of an entire generation of "Third-Worldists" who were barely adolescents during the Algerian War. To all this one must add the surprising impact of Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*[31] and the French cultural industry ability to provide international resonance for every Parisian dispute.[32] Increasingly on the defensive and in the minority within the Left, the PCF was unable to grasp the complexity of the situation and reacted by seeking in Moscow and in the East the energies to subsist in an unfavorable environment. The result could only be the break of the *Union de la Gauche*. During the night between September 21 and 22 1977, the three leaders, Marchais, Mitterrand and Fabre came to the realization that an agreement was no longer possible because of the nationalization question.

During this period, radicals began re-examining the complicity between the two working class parties and French imperialism, and the lost chances between the Resistance and Liberation.[33] If in 1976 Ellenstein had sought to explain to the French the "Italian" model,[34] in 1977 Girault and others undertook a study of the consensus and the spread of the Communist Party between the two wars.[35] Usually, communist scholars are at their best when they focus on their own history without having to worry about their relation to reformists, the "Italians," and other cultural traditions. Even Robrieux, Thorez' biographer, came out with the history of communist youth between 1953 and 1968, full of autobiographic reminiscences useful in tracing home-made Stalinism.[36] As for the discovery of the PCF's rootedness in the ethnological traditions of the French people a socio-anthropological approach became necessary. Similarly, an analysis of Thorez' charisma[37] spelled out the ethnopsychological profile of the French leader with all its myths: the French and the Soviet motherlands, work, the family, etc.

The confusion and disorientation generated by the break of the *Union de la*

30. See André Glucksmann, *La cuoca e il mangiauomini* (Milan: L'Erba Voglio, 1977).

31. See Claude Lefort, *L'uomo al bando. Riflessioni sull 'Arcipelago Gulag* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1980).

32. For an incisive critique, see Louis Janover, *Les intellectuels face á* l'histoire (Paris: Galilee, 1980).

33. See Gregoire Madjasian, *La Question coloniale et la politique du Parti communiste françois 1944-1947* (Paris: Maspero, 1977); and Yvan Craipeau, *La Libération confisquée* (Paris: Savelli/Sylar, 1978).

34. Jean Ellenstein, *Le P.C.* (Paris: Grasset, 1976).

35. See Jacques Girault, *Sur l'implantation du parti communiste français dans l'entre-deux-querres* (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1977).

36. Philippe Robreaux, *Notre génération communiste 1953-1968* (Paris: Laffont, 1977).

37. See Jacqueline Mer, *Le parti de Maurice Thorez ou le bonheur communiste français* (Paris. Payot, 1977).

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*Gauche* became clear in the 1978 legislative elections. The Left, who had won the municipal elections the year before, was defeated. This time the failure spread also to the Socialist Party, which obtained 22.6% of the vote, while the PCF remained pat at 20.6%. The Socialist Party held steady, while a climate of crisis shook the PCF which reacted by recoiling into its own history, principles, and international alliances (to the obsolete *internationalisme proletarien* it substituted *solidarité internationaliste* while actually changing nothing). The tortuous and difficult effort of many decades to reach unity and a Left government began to look like a Sisyphean effort.[38] Unlike the 1920 break, the 1922-24 Bolshevization, the 1929-33 strategy of social fascism, the 1939-41 Hitler-Stalin pact, the 1947 Cold War, the 1956 Hungarian revolution, etc., this time the Communist Party's break with the Socialist Party was due to purely internal reasons — even if there were suspicions concerning Soviet preferences for Giscard over Mitterrand. It was the development of a new Socialist Party that the Communists could neither understand nor accept. By that time, what divided the two parties was a whole culture and language.

In the meantime, within the PCF Marchais' position revealed its paralyzing ambiguity in contraposition to Althusser's "Left-wing" dissent, demanding coherence with the unchangeable principles of scientific historic materialism, and Ellenstein's "Right-wing" Italo-phile dissent demanding an immediate return to Eurocommunism.[39] Both Althusser and Ellenstein did not hesitate to use the "bourgeois" press such as *Le Monde* as a forum, thus generating the indignation of the party's bigots. What was more important, in 1978 many intellectuals and intermediate cadres began to criticize the party apparatus and silently drop out. Thus, the perenially crucial question of the intellectuals once again came to the fore. Not by accident, 1979 saw the publication of a French translation of David Caute's excellent study on *The Fellow Travelers* (1973), tracing relations between bolshevism and the international intelligentsia.[40]

1979 was also the year of the PCF's definitive re-Russianification during the XXIII Congress, which also gave "a globally positive balance" concerning Eastern European countries — an unfortuante expression destined to become an ironic slogan in the reports of non-communist correspondents from Prague, Kabul, Warsaw, Phnom Penh, Moscow and Adis Ababa. The test for the rediscovered faith came in Christmas 1979 when the Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan. Marchais support was quick and unconditional, thus intensifying the split between intellectuals and the PCF. After 1980, the culture of the party became that of the apparatus. There were no longer any mediations by intellectuals. Nor did it help that some ex-Maoists militants dutifully came back to the fold after Deng's restoration in Peking. For these

38. Branko Lazitch, *L'échec permanent. L'alliance communiste-socialiste* (Paris: Laffont, 1978), pp. 7-12.

39. It should not be forgotten that Ellenstein wrote about the USSR works which have had great internatioal success during the years of the Common Program and which after the 1977 turn, the party has regarded with great and growing diffidence.

40. David Caute, *Les compagnons de route 1917-1968* (Paris: Laffont, 1979).

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and other the old militants, the PCF began publishing a surprisingly aggressive new weekly. To everyone's surprise, the magazine was called *Revolution*. How can the PCF hope to gain power if it locked itself in the ghetto of a sectarian and raucous opposition, characterized by a safe ultra-sovietism and an unlikely revolutionary fervor? Ruling out revolution as well as the reformism implicit in a coalition with the Socialist Party, many began to suspect that this time *tertium datur*. The PCF would seek power, not through an electoral majority of the entire Left, nor by means of a revolutionary putsch, but through a dislocation of international power relations. Would Paris become another Kabul? Would the PCF become Quisling's party? A certain Cold War climate (artificially staged by the PCF itself) resurfaced and the party seemed almost pleased with itself, according to the principle: "Many enemies, much honor."

In 1980, this paradoxical situation and the feeling of confronting an historical *déjà vu* stimulated a number of studies concerning the PCF. By then, however, the age of indulgence was over. the PCF found a sympathetic reception only within its own fold — where, however, exceptions were not lacking. Even Ellenstein was purged on spurious grounds: it is argued that he himself practically purged himself through his behavior. In a passionate reconstruction of dissent within the PCF, Pierre Daix located in the party's national-communism a kind of "Blanquism with tartar sauce" (Rappaport's epitaph for bolshevism) meant to vindicate the burning defeats of the French working class movement with its unconditional support of the USSR. One must not forget, argued Daix, that when the PCF "was born in Tours, Mathiez was teaching in the Sorbonne that the October Revolution realized the hopes of 1793."[41] Lenin was seen as Robespierre without the Thermidor. The PCF's nationalism healed the wounds in the country's history with the help of the USSR. Thus, PCF heretics place themselves at the margins of a history which is sacred, and are consequently excommunicated. Daix's book paraded all those who, from the founding father Souvarine to Tillon, had been corrupted by the "revisionist" doubt. What resulted was a history of the party focusing with satisfaction on the party itself. But then, out came the monumental *Histoire Interieure* by the untiring Philippe Robrieux with a title that is extremely indicative for understanding the PCF's twists and turns.[42] This was a solid and detailed reference work written by an ex-communist. For their part, the communists could only answer with a new manual, a little more detailed than the one of 1964, but still with the unmistakable mark of a party-school text.[43]

Even the most dramatic chapter dealing with the fall of the Popular Front up to the formation of the National Front, with the 1939-41 interlude was analyzed in an exhaustive, well-documented and unusually detached volume.[44] The arrival point of the whole effort from the clandestinity imposed

41. Pierre Daix, *Les Hérétiques du PCF* (Paris: Laffont, 1980), p. 11.
42. Philippe Robrieux, *Histoire intérieure du parti communiste 1920-1945* (Paris: Fayard, 1980).
43. See *Dans le PCF. Etapes et problèmes* (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1981).
44. See Stephanie Courtois, *Le PCF dans la querre. De Gaulle, la Résistance, Staline...* (Paris: Ramsay, 1980).

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by Daladier to the rough *entente cordiale* with De Gaulle is the "historical compromise" Thorez was able to negotiate under extremely difficult conditions. When this historical compromise took place — even if it lasted so short a time — it generated the heavy and virulent phase of "French Stalinism." A study dedicatd to this theme[45] revealed an incredible mosaic where diatribes concerning the motherland of socialism blended in with the cult of personality, boorish national-populism, scientific and artistic obscurantism, and a crude repertoire of commonplaces. The PCF's 1977-80 turn had, however, this clear merit: it allowed all tendencies (although the Right remained quiet, maybe considering "this" PCF an indirect ally) to settle accounts once and for all — and not just on the theoretical level as during the pioneering days of "Socialisme ou barbarie" — with what Ellenstein had called the "Stalinist phenomenon." The PCF's new wave of Stalinism in the second half of the 1970s contributed to a merciless analysis of the first wave of Stalinism. This time the analysis was not undertaken by a "Marxist" diaspora questioning the role and the fate of the USSR, but by historians focusing on a party which is and remains, despite the Right's accusations, profoundly French. Among other things, after the flickering of the "new philosophers," this period saw an extremely interesting libertarian re-examination of the problems of democracy by much more solid scholars.[46] The PCF's new Stalinism triggered efforts by intellectuals to nail down the labor movement's democratic and socialist conquests as an irreversible broadening of freedom for all.

With the coming of the 60th anniversary of the Congress of Tours (December 1920), which gave birth to the PCF, the party's publishing house put out an excellent edition of the acts of the congress, including the preparatory documents. This made available the means necessary for an understanding of the history of the party. At the same time, out came a study concerning militancy and cooptation within the party during its first years of life.[47] Confronted with this scholarly offensive which sought to explain the reasons for the survival of such a strange political machine, the party reacted in its typical way, by recoiling upon itself — this time with unquestionable documentary expertise — and flaunting its Leninist and proletarian pedigree.

Interesting also are the "revelations" concerning Tours by the 86-year-old Boris Souvarine, who recalled that the congress' resolution did not contain the 21 conditions of adherence to the International — which indicates the

45. Bernard Legendre, *Le stalinisme français. Qui a dit quoi? (1944-1956)*, (Paris: Seuil, 1980).

46. Among the ex-members of "Socialisme ou Barbarie" who have recently participated in this, see Cornelius Castoriadis, *Devant la Guerre. Le Réalités* (Paris: Fayard, 1981) and Claude Lefort, *L'invention démocratique. Les limites de la domination totalitaire* (Paris: Fayard, 1981). For a re-reading of a journal of the socialist Left, see Pierre Rolle, "Socialisme ou barbarie, in *Non! Repéres pour le socialisme*, No. 8 (July-August 1981), pp. 129-143. For a reconsideration of the classics, see Marcel Gauchet, "Préface" to Benjamin Constant, *De la liberté chez les modernes. Ecrits politique*, (Paris: Le livre du poche, 1980), pp. 11-91; and Francois Furet, "Préface" to Alexis de Tocqueville, *De la démocratie in Amérique* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1981), pp. 8-46.

47. See *Le Congrez3s de Tours* (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1980); and Danielle Tartakowski, *Les premiers communistes français* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1980).

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fudging by the neo-bolshevik ex-social-patriots Cachin and Frassard.[48] Even the socialist Verdier examined the congress to ask the question "what was the good of Tours?"[49] In fact, the PCF had managed to resist the internal contortions of the communist world but, notwithstanding the impossibility of applying in the West the famous 21 conditions, it had not succeeded in eliminating or in overcoming the Socialist Party. It was now 1981 and the presidential elections that were to put an end to Giscard's career were nearing. While the PCF seemed almost explicitly intent on displaying its most clamorously sectarian and obscurantist image, the most pressing question became: what is the use of the PCF? After applauding the Russians in Afghanistan, out came the criticisms of the Polish Summer and of "Solidarity." But the PCF's apparently self-lacerating operation was not limited to foreign policy. In domestic policy the "progressive" working class party did not hesitate to show a bothersome national-conservative side. The bulldozer sent against the shacks of the poor immigrants of Mali by a communist mayor, as well as other discriminatory persecutions against the families of Arab workers accused of distributing drugs, may have appealed to some workers bothered by racial tensions in a country with a colonial past and with heavy immigration, but they resulted mainly in a shocked indignation. The last representative of an intellectual internal opposition, the "leftist" Etienne Balibar, publicly protested (in *Nouvel Observateur*) and was readily thrown out of the party. In a new brilliant but superficial pamphlet, the no longer "new" philosopher Bernard-Henri Lévy associated the PCF with the racist and reactionary currents of French political history.[51]

The paradox unfolded in the May 1981 presidential elections. The PCF candidate, an aggressive and explicitly "plebeian" Georges Marchais, obtained in the first ballot only 15% of the vote, losing over a quarter of the votes that traditionally went to the party during the previous 15 years: thus, the PCF reached the size of Chuhal's Portuguese Communist Party. On the other hand, Mitterrand's success was overwhelming. In the second ballot, thanks also to the communists' decisive support, Mitterrand became president with a margin over Giscard even larger than the Giscard himself had in 1974. A socialist had come to the presidency of the republic without any Union de la Gauche, without a Common Program, and with the help of a relatively "minor" party. The new president almost immediately dissolved the National Assembly and set new legislative elections with the intent of bringing the chamber of representatives in line with the Presidency of the Republic.

Between the May presidential elections and the June legislative elections, the second volume of Robrieux' ponderous research was published.[52] The

48. See Boris Souvarine, "La vérité sur le congrés de Tours," in *L'Express*, No. 1535 (December 13, 1980), pp. 100-111.
49. Robert Verdier, *Bilan d'une scission. Congrés de Tours* (Paris: Gallimard, 1981).
50. See Georges Lavau, *A quoi sert le parti communiste français?* (Paris: Fayard, 1981).
51. See Bernard-Henri Lévy, *L'ideologia francese* (Milan: Spirali, 1981).
52. See Philippe Robrieux, *Histoire intérieure du parti communiste 1945-1972, op. cit.*

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volume's nucleus focused on the failure of the French Khrushchev, Waldeck Rochet, to reform the party from within.

The result of the legislative elections turned out to be even more glamorous than the presidential ones. The consensus accorded Mitterrand, a man with unquestionable charisma, was extended to the entire party which obtained (thanks to the electoral mechanisms of the Fifth Republic) the absolute majority of the seats. The subsequent participation in the government by the communists — who accepted an incredible and humiliating total shift in their political direction (no support for Poland and a turnaround in their support of the Afghan invasion) — was not really needed to govern. In the legislative elections the communists confirmed the ruinous failure of the presidential elections and, with respect to 1978, went from 86 to 44 seats, while the socialists grew from 115 to 283 seats.[53] When it mattered, the PCF had shown itself totally incapable of renovating itself from within. Any (forced) change can take place only on the basis of a shock from outside, such as a defeat which this time had been electoral, political and also, so to speak, "ideal," given the isolation in which the party had found itself. Paradoxically, this defeat was rewarded with participation in the government with four ministers. But the whole party had become hostage to the socialist majority. Now in a position of irremediable subalternity, a sectarian and conservative party had been forced, against its own traditions, to transform itself into a "party of government." This paradox certainly could not have been foreseen.

53. See "Les élections législatives de juin 1981. La gauche socialiste obtient la majorité absolue," a supplement to *Le Monde*, (June 1981).

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# THE CFDT: BEYOND REALLY ATTAINABLE FRENCH SOCIALISM?

by Richard P. Shryock

The municipal elections held in March 1983 have produced rather ambiguous results. While the Left was dealt a severe blow by the electorate in the first round of voting, the government managed to rally its supporters in the second round and limit the damage.[1] Having chastised Planning Minister Rocard and CFDT leader Maire for their pre-electoral calls for a new austerity program, Mauroy in appointing a new government gave increased powers to precisely those advocating such positions (notably Delors, now Minister of the Economy, Budget and Finance) and replaced those who had called for statist reindustrialization and protectionism (notably Chevènement, leader of the PS Left-wing CERES, who was ousted from his post as Minister of Industry and Research). In the internal battle between the "*realistes*" and "*classistes*" for control of the PS and the government's program, the municipals for now seem to have given the upper hand to the former. It remains to be seen whether Mitterrand's latest tactical shift will be of long duration.

The CFDT (French Democratic Labor Confederation) has not been a disinterested observer in this struggle. In fact, Maire had brought the intergovernmental rivalries to a head when, following his January 31st meeting with Mitterrand, he indicated that the government recognized the need for a "second plan of rigor" following the elections. His "disloyal attitude" was roundly criticized by Jospin, titular head of the PS, who asserted that "the screwdriver is not the only tool of political economy" and indicated that an austerity program to combat inflation might also produce a major recession.[2]

The dispute, however, went beyond such policy differences to address the

1. The March 1983 election results are somewhat difficult to interpret. The drop in the vote for the Left on the first ballot was in part offset by increased support (and fewer abstentions) on the second. The Left thus lost only 31 mayoralities in cities of over 30,000 population and still controls 120 out of 220 such cities (though the Right now controls 24 of 36 cities with over 100,000 population). While several government ministers and high party officials lost in the first round, all those still running in the second won. The socialists lost ground in traditional areas of strength (Nord, Midi) but held on in areas recently won over (Ouest). The communists lost votes, while often maintaining their majority, in cities of traditional strong support (Saint-Ouen, Argeneneuil, Montreuil, in the Rhone and Bouches-du-Rhone, etc.), had mixed results in areas won in 1977 (losing Reims and St. Eteinne, holding Le Mans and Bourges), and gained in those regions suffering severe economic dislocation (Thionville, Longwy, etc.). While it is not yet clear which social groups deserted the Left, the PCF setbacks and results of recent opinion polls indicate some disaffection of the working class. See *Nouvel Observateur* (March 18-24, 1983). In a poll published in *L'Expansion* in February 1983, 51% of the workers surveyed felt that the Left had not kept its 1981 electoral promises, though only 21% generally opposed government policy and only 14% blamed government policy for France's economic ills. See: "La classe ouvrière juge la gauche," *L'Expansion* (February 4-17, 1983).

2. For a report on this debate, see: *Le Monde* (February 2, 1983); see *Libération* (February 3, 1983) for an interview with Maire.



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role of trade unions in socialist France. Jospin, backed by Ancient Le Pors (PCF Minister of the Civil Service) and others in both Left parties, criticized Maire for overstepping his role as a trade union leader: "it is not for a trade union official to say what will be or should be the next phase of governmental action," declared Le Pors.[3] Maire's action nevertheless was designed primarily to regain the initiative for the trade unions and impart to the CFDT its long coveted role as "motor of change." While the majority of the governmental coalition would doubtless prefer to restrict the unions' role to one of transmission belt, Maire may once again have gambled on the Rocardian faction's ascendance in the wake of a Left defeat in the municipals. Not coincidentially, Michel Rocard, in an interview with *L'Expansion* (the French version of *Business Week*) published just a few days after Maire's declaration, echoed the call for a new economic realism and criticized the role played by "archaic," "vertical" structures (state administration, parties, traditional trade unions, etc.) in sterilizing political debate. Rocard indicated that the public appreciated those leaders not constrained by bureaucratic loyalties who speak out on the direction that France must take, i.e., those of the "*deuxième gauche*" with historic ties to the CFDT and PSU (*Parti Socialiste Unifiée*).[4]

As indicated above, Maire's political intervention stemmed in large part from the CFDT's inability to find its proper place in socialist France. The change in attitude of the regime's working-class base from one of a "state of grace" to "passive benevolence" (to quote Maire at the CFDT congress in May 1982) has effectively immobilized the trade unions, which along with the general populace seem to await for reforms to be handed down from the government. This stalemate in social relations is all the more frustrating to the CFDT leadership given its aspirations immediately following the elections. Maire in August 1981 had asked: "Will the new political power be the sole force of impetus — in which case, this action from above in the state and on the state will soon encounter its limits — or will it be able to articulate its decisions with the autonomous action of social forces mobilized [to carry out] major transformations of civil society and the state."[5]

The CFDT sees its role as the guiding force behind this social movement to transform French civil society and the state. The problem that the CFDT has never satisfactorily resolved is how the unions can undertake such a mission given their traditional institutional weakness (the five major confederations represent only 20% of the workforce) and long exclusion from the centers of decision-making. While distrustful of state power and desirous of promoting social movements, the CFDT periodically has been forced to admit that it cannot go it alone. In effect, the CFDT must help build a political force that can capture the state, strengthen union power, and initiate a new social

3. *Le Monde* (February 2, 1983).

4. "Michel Rocard à coeur ouvert" [interview with Bernard Lalanne], *L'Expansion* (February 4-17, 1983), pp. 59-64. The term "deuxieme gauche" became popular currency with the 1982 publication of the first book on the CFDT, i.e., Hevré Hamon and Patrick Rotman, *La Deuxième gauche: Histoire intellectuelle et politique de la CFDT* (Paris: Editions Ramsay, 1982).

5. *Le Monde* (August 25-26, 1981).

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dynamic, which in turn runs counter to the claim that trade unions and political parties have an equivalent role.

*1958-78: From Democratic Planning to Autogestion*

This problematic — the CFDT's aspiration to be the motor of social change and the concomitant need to find a political partner to conquer the state apparatus and impart to the unions this role — has a long history in the CFDT.[6] In fact, the issue dates back to the struggles of the *Reconstruction* group to deconfessionalize the *Confederation Française des Travailleurs Chretiens* (CFTC) and move it in a social-democratic direction.[7] From the liberation to the 1964 transformation of the CFTC into the CFDT, the "minority" waged an all-out struggle against the Catholic leadership of the confederation, which derived its support from Christian office workers and civil servants and preached class collaboration through collective bargaining and the establishment of corporatist structures.[8] In the pages of *Cahiers Reconstruction*, the minority began to spell out the contours of its alternative social-democratic program. Inspired both by Christian personalism (especially Mounier and the journal *Esprit*) and European social-democracy (both British and German), the minority placed great emphasis on democratic planning (the report written by Declercq, *Pour une planification democratique*, was adopted by the CFTC in 1959) and a cultural struggle against the twin dangers of "neo-capitalism" (à la Marcuse's later *One-Dimensional Man*) and "communist totalitarianism."

The minority's aim was to forge a modern trade unionism that would face up to the socio-economic and political problems of the time. They sought to "reconquer the working-class" in favor of democratic socialism — a working-

6. On the CFDT in English, see: René Mouriaux, "The CFDT: From the Union of Popular Forces to the Success of Social Change," in *The French Workers Movement: Economic Crisis and Political Change*, ed. by Mark Kesselman, trans. by Edward Diaz, Arthur Goldhammer and Richard Shryock (London: Allen and Unwin, forthcoming 1983); Stephen Bornstein, "From Social-Christianity to Left Socialism: The Itinerary of the Catholic Labor Movement in France" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1979); Everett Kassalow, "Christian Trade Unionism in France: A Left Socialist Experience," *Industrial Relations*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (1977), pp. 3-17; and Everett Kassalow, "The Transformation of Christian Trade Unionism in France," *Journal of Economic Issues*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (March 1974), pp. 1-39. In French, see especially the aforementioned book by Hamon and Rotman and the special issue of *Esprit*: "La CFDT et la crise du syndicalisme" *Esprit* (April 1980). For a PCF and Trotskyist perspective, see: Jean-Claude Poulain, *CFDT: Le rêve et la vie* (Paris: Editions sociales, 1981); Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire, *CFDT: Le recentrage ou la gestion de l'austerité* (Paris: La Breche, 1979). For the best work on the CGT, see George Ross, *Workers and Communists in France* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1982).

7. "Reconstruction" was the name given to a journal established by three CFTC dissidents in 1946: Fernand Hennebicq (Electric-Gas Utilities Federation), Charles Savouillan (Metalworkers), and Paul Vignaux (SGEN, the teachers federation). Other principal forces that gathered around "Reconstruction" were leaders from the major industrial unions in the CFTC — Albert Detraz (Construction), Eugène Descamps (Metalworkers), Raymond Marion and Edmond Maire (Chemical workers), and Paul Butet (Railroad workers) — several departmental union leaders — Gilbert Declercq (Loire-Atlantique), René Mathevet and Marcel Gonin (Loire) — and assorted academicians — Jacques Julliard, Pierre Aycoberry, and Jacques Delors. For an intellectual history of "Reconstruction," see: Paul Vignaux, *De la CFTC à la CFDT: Syndicalisme et socialisme [Reconstruction 1946-72]* (Paris: Editions ouvrieres, 1980).

8. Gerard Thormann, "The Ideological Evolution of French Christian Trade Unionism since World War II," *Catholic Historical Review*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (Arpil 1970), pp. 67-93.

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class split between those under the sway of the communist-dominated *Confédération Generale du Travail* (CGT) or depoliticized as a result of the byzantine political intrigues of the Fourth Republic. Even at this early stage, we can see the problems that would beset the CFDT in the late 1970s in very different economic and political circumstances.

First, there was the question of the nature of trade union action within a bourgeois capitalist system. Here, the minority placed its faith in militant collective bargaining and the use of the strike (held in reserve by the CFTC leadership) based on the AFL-CIO model.[9] The minority thus placed great emphasis on building up the industrial-based federations and establishing a strike fund in order to bargain from a position of strength. And minority led federations played key roles in the tough strike actions in the public sector in 1953 and in metal-working firms in Nantes and St. Nazaire in 1955 (much to the consternation of the CFTC leadership).

The issue of the utility of collective bargaining tied in to the second major problem that had to be faced by the minority, i.e., that of alliances in the union and political domain. Given the suspicion manifested by *Force Ouvrière* and FEN (the major teachers' union) toward the non-laic CFTC and faced with the predominance of the CGT, the minority had to accept some sort of unity of action with the CGT. *Reconstruction* was careful to warn, however, against any political collaboration with the communist-dominated CGT, calling for tactical accords on precise economic issues and a continuing ideological competition.[10]

The limitations on unity of action and the linkage between the CGT and the PCF posed the problem of the CFTC's ties to non-communist parties and the state. The *Reconstruction* group was hesitant to play by the rules of the Fourth Republic political game according to which unions sought access to the state through privileged relations with allied political parties (the *Mouvement Republicain Populaire* in the case of the CFTC). *Reconstruction* condemned the "regime of parties" which had brought disorder to French political life and criticized the MRP for its rightist policies, especially given its role in terminating the 1953 strike wave (the close relations between the MRP and CFTC leadership had continued even after the minority had pushed through a

9. In 1949, just prior to the passage on a law re-establishing collective bargaining, *Reconstruction* underscored the potential power that this would give the unions: "The discussion of working conditions will enable the trade unions to reassert their power, to defeat the *patronat*'s goal of social regression. Collective bargaining will have whatever value that we give it, will be what we will be; the stronger the working class shows itself, the better the agreements will be. Collective bargaining, in effect, presupposes a discussion on the basis of equality, thus a certain balance of forces on the terrain [of conflict]. This notion of [relation] of forces is essential." Cited in "De la CFTC à la CFDT: Syndicalisme et socialisme," *Notes et documents du BRAEC,* No. 13 (July-September 1980), p. 39.

10. Our conception consists of limiting the aims of common action; these are situated on the so-called economic or professional plan of demands where even communist trade union officials must do their job in order to maintain their working-class base...[We] clearly refuse to allow corporative unity of action to turn into political unity. "Syndicalisme et communisme: les problèmes de l'unité de l'action," *Cahiers Reconstruction,* No. 47-8 (August-September 1957), cited in *Ibid*, p. 34.

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resolution in 1946 prohibiting union officials from holding political positions). Yet, *Reconstruction* recognized that it had to help revive the non-communist Left if the structural reforms in the economy and the political arena were to be carried out. After the failure of unity efforts with the SFIO (the Socialist Party) in the immediate post-war years and again in 1953 and the disappointment engendered by the SFIO's role in the Suez crisis, *Reconstruction* declared itself in favor of a "*socialisme de conception, non de parti.*"[11] The union was given the task of "reconquering the working class" through educational action, pointing out the real structural problems the society faced, and promoting a "*mouvement d'opinion*" in favor of democratic socialism.

To repeat, we thus find in the debates within the *Reconstruction* group in the 1950s an echo of the prominent themes of the CFDT in the late 1970s. It was left up to the trade union to educate the working class as to the real problems facing society and articulate a vision of democratic socialism that would address these. Collective bargaining could be used to promote major reforms, given a proper balance of forces. This entailed tactical alliances with the CGT, which to be of utility had to remain of an economic, rather than political, nature. Meanwhile, the CFTC was to help promote a broad movement in favor of democratic socialism that would not subordinate the unions to archaic political parties.

The problem was that the political conjuncture of the 1960s did not favor such a strategy. Collective bargaining remained undeveloped, especially at the firm level where the union had no legal protection until 1969.[12] After some initial hopes to influence modernists (notably Pierre Massé) in the Gaullist government in the direction of democratic planning, it became clear after the promulgation of the Fifth Plan that the trade union imput would be limited. The actions of the De Gaulle regime that culminated in the 1963 miners' strike dispelled any illusions of possible collaboration.[13]

Unity of action was not so easily confined to the economic sphere. The political divisions of the unions had been a contributing factor to the Left's failure to mobilize in support of the Republic against the *coup d'etat* threat in 1958.[14] Furthermore, the CFTC was obligated to join with other unions, including the CGT, in a "*front syndical*" to lend support to a peaceful solution to the Algerian crisis.

*Reconstruction* had to be relatively cautious until 1964 given the internal power struggle within the CFTC. For example, it originally lent its support to the ephemeral *Union des Forces Democratiques* (a regrouping of the non-communist Left outside the SFIO) but drew back when the "laborist" concep-

11. "Socialisme de conception, non de parti," *Cahiers Reconstruction*, No. 37 (October 1956), p. 1.

12. See the essays by George Ross and Janice McCormick in *The Fifth Republic at Twenty*, ed. by William Andrews and Stanley Hoffmann (Albany: SUNY Press, 1980).

13. Stephen Bornstein, "Unions and the Economy in France: The Changing Posture of the CFDT," *European Studies Newsletter*, Vol. 7, No. 5 (April-May 1978), pp. 1-12.

14. Eugène Descamps, *Militer* (Paris, Fayard, 1971), pp. 84-85,184-86.
*Ibid*, pp. 182-204, 234-59.

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tions of Mendes-France were defeated in favor of a more orthodox party conception that would later produce the PSU (*Reconstruction* also feared that its involvement with UFD would push the CFTC majority to opt in favor of a *Rassemblement des Forces Democratiques*, i.e., a merger of the CFTC, MRP and a farmer's organization). In the early 1960s then *Reconstruction* members contented themselves with participation in Left political clubs (essentially think-tanks), such as the Club Jean Moulin, where they debated the nature of democratic planning and the ideal type of political regrouping of the non-communist Left. The real political battle in this period was waged within the CFTC, culminating in its deconfessionalization in 1964 and the ascendancy of the *Reconstruction* minority to leadership positions.

Events began to accelerate in the mid-1960s with the end of the deconfessionalization battle, pressures in the labor market, and the first tentative moves in the direction of a Left political alliance. The CFDT began to play a more active role in the regrouping of the non-communist Left, albeit in several directions at once. In 1962 the CFTC together with the CNJA (*Confederation Nationale des Jeunes Agriculteurs*) established the *Groupe de Recherches Ouvrier-Paysan* (GROP). Originally just another think tank, loosely collaborating with the Club Jean Moulin, GROP played a more overt political role in the efforts to build a coalition around Defferre's candidacy for President. Many CFDT leaders were profoundly disappointed with the failure to overcome the differences between the MRP and SFIO and construct a broad center-left political party along the lines of the American Democratic Party (with, of course, similar political weight for associated trade unions); it was their disgust with "party games" that produced the consequent lackluster support of Mitterrand's presidential bid in 1965. The CFDT also participated in the two other efforts to reconstitute a modern Left party, i.e., the *Colloques Socialistes* of 1963-64 (orchestrated by dissidents within the SFIO but with party leader Guy Mollet's support) and the *Rencontres socialistes de Grenoble* of 1966 (conducted by such New Left leaders as Mendes-France and Rocard).

Mitterrand's surprise strong showing in the 1965 presidential contest with De Gaulle posed the question of a future united Left conquest of state power for the first time. Descamps, the CFDT leader, wasted no time in acting so as to best position the CFDT within a united Left. A precipitous unity pact was reached with the CGT in January 1966, which led to a revival of industrial struggles at both the firm and national levels. The CFDT-CGT pact, however, doomed efforts at merger with FO and FEN which might have counterbalanced CGT organizational strength. Instead, the CFDT sought to strengthen its ties to the new *Federation de la Gauche Democratique et Socialiste* (FGDS) headed by Mitterrand and grouping together the SFIO, Radical Party, and political clubs. As Descamps later admitted, the aim was to replicate the CFDT-CGT accord at the union level through a FGDS-PCF accord at the political level. Furthermore, paralleling Mitterrand's later characterization of *Union de la Gauche*, Descamps saw the purpose of the CGT-CFDT pact as an effort to

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bolster the CFDT at the expense of the CGT.[15]

One problem was that the leadership engineered these moves in essence over the heads of the membership. Thus, despite important national coordination with the CGT to defend social security and jobs, joint action at the base ran into real difficulties.[16] Furthermore, the rapprochement with the FGDS (which was, however, limited to discussion between the respective leaderships, only the SGEN having any organic ties to the FGDS) sparked an intense internal debate as to the political role of the CFDT. Advocates of a "common strategy" asserted that the trade unions had to play an active role in the modernization of the political structures and socio-economic tissue of French society. As the state was not a neutral entity, this entailed working together with the non-communist Left to elaborate a "counter-plan," a charter of mutual responsibilities in the advent of a future Left government. Advocates of an "autonomous strategy," on the other hand, representing industrial sectors in decline or regional groupings (especially Loire-Atlantique under Declercq), believed that the "counter plan" idea might endanger trade union independence or compromise it in the event of a Left defeat.[17] Although this debate was cut short by the events of May 1968, it would resurface in the late 1970s with the breakdown of the *Union de la Gauche*.

The period from May 1968 to June 1974 was the heyday of CFDT *gauchisme*. The CFDT attempted to play a vanguard, maximalist role during the May 1968 events, courting the student leaders and even planning a de facto seizure of power under Mendes-France leadership. *Autogestion* was propagated for the first time: the CFDT *Bureau Conferal* on May 16 in effect calling for the establishment of workers' councils.[18] This, of course, ran counter to the CGT attempt to contain the worker-student uprising and broke the back of the CGT-CFDT unity-of-action agreement.

The events also produced a heightened sense of the CFDT's political power. At first confusion reigned within the confederation. The May 1970 Congress saw six factions jockeying for power: from those sympathetic to the new Chaban-Delmas government's "contracts for progress" for the "new society" (as formulated by Chaban's advisor on social affairs and former "Reconstruction" collaborator, Jacques Delors) to those promoting "dual power" (the Trotskyists as well as populists close to Fredo Krumnow of the Haicuitex federation). Nevertheless the Congress put the CFDT officially in the socialist camp and elaborated a social project with three major axes: autogestion, democratic planning, and social ownership of the means of pro-

15. *Ibid*, pp. 182-204, 234-59.

16. As Martin Schain points out, CFDT-CGT problems at the base reflected not only national political differences but also problems of blurred demarcation lines in terms of union identity. Martin Schain, "Relations Between the CGT and CFDT: Politics and Mass Mobilization," in Mark Kesselman (ed), *op. cit.*

17. Marcel Gonin, "Deux propositions de strategies syndicales," *Formation* (January-February 1968).

18. *Autogestion* was first discussed in the Chemicals Federation (under Edmond Maire's leadership) in 1965-66. This federation had also been the primary supporter of the "common strategy" discussed above.

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duction and exchange.[19]

The FGDS had collapsed in May 1968 and the Socialist Party underwent a major internal power struggle that culminated only in June 1971 with Mitterrand's appointment as party leader and the 1972 signing of the Common Program with the PCF. The CFDT thus saw itself as the hegemonic force on the socialist Left in the early 1970s. The leadership initiated an ideological debate with the CGT that was to define the contours of a socialist project —what political force was to implement such a project remained unclear.[20] It can even be argued that the CFDT underwent an anarcho-syndicalist phase in this period, promoting militant strikes (at *Joint Francaise, Usinor-Dunkerque, Ferodo*) to recruit unskilled workers and force a political change through action at the base. The CFDT initially viewed the Common Program with suspicion as not sufficiently bold and too narrow in its political support.

This position, however, was not easy to maintain and the CFDT was inevitably pulled into support for the *Union de la Gauche*. Several reasons for this evolution can be cited. First, the majority of the CFDT membership was doubtless attracted by the prospect that the *Union de la Gauche* offered for reuniting the French Left. In addition, many militants felt that the confederation's critical support line did not sufficiently take into account the problem of the state. Thus, an amendment was put forth at the 36th Congress in 1973, backed by 37 union locals, calling for "the conquest of political and economic power [as a] prerequisite to the establishment of a self-managed socialist society."

Second, the practice of militant struggles began to run into an impasse. Ironically, this was most evident at the highly touted 1973 strike at the Lip watch factory, when workers occupied and ran this firm slated for closure. Although the CFDT gave its support to this example of *autogestion* in action, it cautioned that such practices represented only a tactic not a strategy, i.e., no islands of *autogestion* could be created within a capitalist economy. The union leadership was no doubt disturbed over the influence at Lip of the extreme Left, the bypassing of established union organs (the inter-union strike committee taking a leading role), and the spawning of "children of Lip" at other sites. Furthermore, the CFDT leadership believed that the only long run solution to the Lip strike (and other similar occupations in the face of plant closings) was an intervention by the state to provide the financial incentive for restructuring of the firm. The CFDT had little success in its negotiations with the Messmer government and had to await the arrival of a providential businessman. Claude Neuschwander, for a (temporary) bail-out of Lip.

Finally, the CFDT came under increasing pressure from the CGT to change its political line. The CFDT in the early 1970s had not only supported militant strikes by unskilled workers (O.S.) but had also championed qualitative

19. "Perspectives et strategie" [document d'orientation adopted at 1970 CFDT Congress], in *La CFDT* (Paris: Seuil, 1971), pp. 125-44.

20. Stephen Bornstein and Keitha Fine, "Worker Control in France: Recent Political Developments," in *Worker Self-Management in Industry: The West European Experience,* ed. by G. David Garson (New York: Praeger, 1977), pp. 152-91.

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demands: reduction in the wage hierarchy, ecological concerns, protection of regional life-style, etc.[21] As the first signs of the economic crisis began to appear in the mid-1970s (albeit later in France than elsewhere), local strikes in favor of qualitative demands gave way to defensive efforts to preserve jobs. The CFDT was thus forced into cooperation with the CGT on the latter's terms, i.e., the promotion of national "days of action" to highlight the necessity of political change.[22]

Nevertheless, in the period from June 1974 (the presidential elections) to September 1977 (the breakdown of Left unity), the CFDT leadership saw themselves as bargaining from a position of strength with the Left parties. The most spectacular example of this thinking was the CFDT participation in the *Assises du Socialisme*. The support given to Mitterrand by the CFDT and the PSU during the presidential campaign led prominent leaders in the CFDT (Maire), PSU (Rocard), and PS (Mauroy) to envisage a merger of these organizations. Mitterrand was convinced by Mauroy and others to launch an appeal, immediately following the near victory in May 1974, for a new socialist regrouping. The CFDT's *Bureau Confederal* indicated its approval, and two weeks later several prominent CFDT leaders (Detraz, Julliard, Heritier, etc.) seconded the call.

The *Assises* offered the promise of creating in France what had long been absent, i.e., a socialist force encompassing all the non-communist Left and backed by strong union ties.[23] Yet this new political force never materialized. The major problem was that the different partners had very different goals in mind. Mauroy wanted a new socialist party modelled after social-democratic parties in Northern Europe; Mitterrand was more interested in neutralizing the CFDT as a political rival. Rocard and his supporters saw it as a way to overcome their political isolation in the tiny PSU; the vast majority of the PSU membership, however, viewed the PS as insufficiently revolutionary. The CFDT itself proved to be torn by divergent positions on the operation. Maire and his supporters, with close ties to Rocard, believed that the "third current" (as the union component was called) would predominate in the new political formation, with even more influence over party strategy and doctrine than that exercised by the TUC within the British Labor Party. Another group, while favoring the operation, aligned themselves with the PS's left wing, the CERES (Center for Socialist Education and Research) which had a more Marxist line than that put forth by Rocard. Other groups opposed the operation altogether: Declercq (Loire-Atlantique) led the anarcho-syndicalist fight against political subordination, the populist Haicuitex federation expressed its reservations, and the extreme Left did its best to sabotage the process (which it saw as directed in part against it) by promoting Charles Piaget, the

21. Michele Durand and Yvette Harff, *La Qualite de la vie: Mouvement ecologique, mouvement ouvrier* (Paris: Moution, 1977).

22. Andrew Martin and George Ross, "European Trade Unions and Economic Crisis: Perceptions and Strategies," *West European Politics*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (January 1980), p. 39. The CGT-CFDT accord of June 1974 covered not only demands but also forms of action.

23. André Salomon, *PS: la mise à nu* (Paris: Laffont, 1980), pp. 165-88; Hammon and Rotman, *op. cit.*, pp. 273-85.

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Lip leader, as an alternative to Mitterrand as standard bearer for the Left. When the *Assises* finally took place in late October 1974, both the PSU and CFDT had withdrawn and only individual members entered an unchanged PS (although these new recruits did affect the power balance within the party).

The CFDT leadership still believed that the confederation was the most dynamic force on the Left. The CFDT began to promote the *union des forces populaires* as an antidote to the more narrow and party-led *union de la gauche*. It also perceived itself as the natural leader of new social movements, as can be seen from the following passage in an article published in CFDT *Aujourd 'hui* (authored by Alain Touraine): "At the end of the 19th century, the socialist parties managed the relation between democratic political action and the nascent workers' movement. In the same way the union must today manage the relationship between new social movements (which are "wildcat," not institutionalized, and inherently connected to the crisis and the progress toward a rupture) and political intervention...The future of trade unionism is to play this role of political mediator for these new social movements (women, ecologist, urban, regional, etc.) in the process of formation."[24] The culmination of this false sense of power was the CFDT elaboration of a "platform of demands" in early 1977 (calling for such measures as a drastic reduction in wage hierarchies, a freeze on nuclear power construction, and the establishment of shop councils in nationalized firms), which was designed to provide the PS with a catalogue of issues to take up with the PCF during the summer 1977 re-negotiation of the Common Program.

As indicated earlier, the CFDT leadership was either misguided about their own strength or bluffing. First, the CFDT between 1974 and 1977 was torn by internal rivalries, born in large part out of the *Assises* operation. At the 37th Congress in 1976 the CFDT leadership had to fight a two front battle: against the Trotskyists of the *Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire* and against a Left current — the "*gauche syndicale*" united around a "contribution" to the CFDT debate signed by such federations as Banking, PTT, Textles, and Rhone-Alpert — directed in large measure by militants close to CERES. While the leadership won this contest, the struggle severely limited their freedom of action. Second, conditions in the labor market had aggravated to such an extent that the CFDT had little choice but to follow the political tactics of the CGT, placing all bets on a Left victory in 1978. Finally, the CFDT could be no more than an anguished observer of the unforeseen rupture of Left unity in September 1977. It did not waste much time, however, in seeking to recapture the initiative.

*1978-81: From Recentrage To Left Victory*

As Ross points out, the strategy pursued by both the CFDT and CGT from 1975 to 1978 proved disasterous to the trade union movement.[25] The unions'

24. Alain Touraine, "L'Avenir du syndicalisme," *CFDT Aujourd 'hui*, No. 19 (May-June 1976), p. 76.

25. This section draws heavily on the analysis of the unions in the crisis situation of the late 1970s set out by George Ross, "French Unions Face the 1980s," *Political Power and Social Theory*, Vol. 3 (1982). pp. 53-75.

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tendency to focus attention on the political sphere, piling demand upon demand to be implemented after the inevitable Left victory in 1978, demobilized the workers at the workplace. Although the government and *patronat* had been somewhat cautious in their attacks on the working class in the run-up to the elections, after March 1978 they were free to unleash all the weapons at their command: cutbacks in public services, repressive public order legislation, layoffs especially of CFDT and CGT militants, increasing resort to temporary labor, and the like. The unions were ill-equipped to stand up to this assault, especially given the demoralization of their base.

The new strategy of "recentering" (*recentrage*), first suggested by Moreau at a Counseil National meeting in January 1978, was designed to meet the challenge not only of the economic crisis but also the crisis of political representation, be it by Left parties or trade unions. Ross summarizes the CFDT rationalization of the new strategy aptly: "If in May 1968 social mobilization existed without any possible Left political success and if in March 1978 political possibilities had existed without any effective social mobilization, then *recentrage* was the way to build the "union of popular forces" that would ultimately bring both components together and lead to change."[26] In practical terms, *recentrage* was to entail, first and foremost, a return to shop floor and branch mobilization and contractual negotiations with the state and patronant over issues of everyday concern to workers. *Recentrage* also had an international dimension to it (as the problems were seen as global in character): the CFDT was to coordinate its actions with other European unions on issues of common concern (talks were thus held with the German DGB on evolution toward a 35-hour work week for example).

*Recentrage* was initially sufficiently ambiguous a concept to allow both Left and Right interpretations. In the Left variant, the return to base-level actions was perceived as an effort to revive the notions of workers' control and *autogestion*. Unity of action was not abandoned in principle but had to built from below. Many militants following this reading of *recentrage* were also supporters of the "union in struggles" (*union dans les luttes*) initiative conducted by CFDT and CGT dissidents to counter the internecine warfare of the party and trade union *etats-majeurs*.

It was the Right variant, however, that prevailed. The themes of past political debate re-emerged — both those of the late 1950s (progressive content of collective bargaining, danger of political unity with the CGT, socialism of ideas not of the party) or the late 1960s (danger of union subordination to Left electoral priorities) — a reflection of a similar groping for a new, more viable stance in a period of political and economic uncertainty. Ross cites two probable central concerns of the CFDT leadership. First, given the long duration of the economic crisis and the dim prospects for any Left victory in the near future, the unions had to save what they could for their constituents. Coupled with this was a belief that contractual politics could work if the unions were reasonable in their demands. This belief was nourished by seem-

26. *Ibid*, p. 66.

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ing CNPF (the employers' association) openness in the mid-1970s (on issues such as the enrichment of work), Giscard's appeals for a new national consensus (which had a social-democratic ring to it), and the success of *Force Ouvrière* in signing collective bargaining agreements (from which CGT and CFDT members had indeed benefitted). Second, the CFDT hoped that collective bargaining backed by rank-and-file mobilization would put the confederation in a competitive advantage vis-à-vis the CGT in recruitment.[27] To help this along, the CFDT launched an ideological campaign against the subordination of the CGT to PCF priorities, whether that be in the form of continuing mass political demonstrations or uncritical support for the USSR in foreign policy (the CGT and PCF, of course, lost no time in denouncing CFDT reformism).

*Recentrage* also had broad political aims. The CFDT hoped that it could turn the crisis to its advantage, promoting its qualitative demands and a new form of trade unionism. For example, given the employer's desire to reduce the wage bill, the CFDT felt that it could use this as an opening to narrow the wage hierarchy. The increasing resort to temporary labor could be transformed into new flexible hours for women and students. The threat to the steel industry could be met with negotiations over how to modernize. The unions' task was to "reunify the [working class] on the basis of a project designed to transform lifestyles, patterns of consumption, and systems of social benefits."[28] If this meant that the unions had to give up their defense of privileged interests and preoccupation with economic growth, then this would be to the better.

As indicated above, this strategy presumed a certain openness on the part of the Giscard regime and the *patronat*. The CFDT hedged its bets, however, by trying simultaneously to exert its leverage within the PS. Immediately following the 1978 defeat, Rocard proposed his candidacy for the 1981 presidential race as an alternative to that of Mitterrand. A bitter feud broke out within the PS between the Left's "two cultures" — "statist and jacobin" (meant to indict the PCF and CERES) and "libertarian and *autogestionnaire*" (as the Rocardians labeled themselves). The CFDT leadership could not help but be seduced by Rocard's discourse in favor of social experimentation and the promotion of social movements (to replace "archaic" Left parties), especially as this was in large part formulated by intellectuals with roots in the CFDT (notably Rosanvallon and Julliard). Rocard attempted to use the parallel discourse of the CFDT to circumvent the party hierarchy and appeal directly to the socialist electorate.

Unfortunately for the CFDT the strategy bets inherent in the *recentrage* strategy failed to pay off. First, while the Giscard regime and the CNPF may have been open to cooperation with the CFDT in 1974-76, the situation in 1978 was very different. Barre was determined to implement his neo-liberal

27. *Ibid*, p. 66.

28. Edmond Maire, "Reunifier la classe ouvrière," in *Crise et avenir de la classe ouvriere*, compiled by the review *Faire* (Paris: Seuil, 1979), p. 70.

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policies in unadulterated form, and the employers were in general set on reducing the influence of the ideological unions (CFDT and CGT) to a minimum. Furthermore, the demoralization of the workers as a result of the 1978 defeat and the impact of the crisis could not be overcome by a new call for negotiations based on day-to-day problems. The aims of the CFDT in such negotiations remained by and large incomprehensible to the membership, and Maire's frequent criticism of the Left and predictions of continuing political gloom did nothing to raise spirits. Second, the CFDT was negotiating from a position of great weakness. Whatever gains the CFDT and CGT had won in the early and mid-1970s had been largely the result of trade union unity and the employer's fear of another May 1968 uprising. FO's gains in more recent years, on the other hand, stemmed from the employer's strategy of using FO as a lever against the CFDT and CGT.[29] From 1978 to 1981, however, the CFDT lacked any reliable union partner: the CGT denounced CFDT collaboration with the forces of reaction, and the FO, CFTC, and CGC (*Confédération Générale des Cadres*) were reluctant to join in a reformist front where they would surely be junior partners. Finally, the support for Rocard backfired, as Mitterrand and CERES mobilized to isolate "neo-laborism" that did not respect party structures and took its marching orders from outside groups, i.e., the CFDT. Thus, on the eve of the Left victory, the CFDT faced a bleak situation.

*1981-83: From Radical Social-Democracy To The Politics of Rigor*

The CFDT were surprised as were all other political observers by the Left victory in May 1981, Maire came out only on April 26th in favor of the Left candidate, i.e., when it was clear that Mitterrand would represent the Left and that the PCF influence had been reduced. The victory sseemed to offer the possibility for the CFDT to take an active role in shaping the government's project and resuscitating its own organization in the course of the social mobilization that was expected in the wake of Left victory. The Mauroy government immediately demonstrated its willingness to talk with union organizations, and several key CFDT officials gave up their union responsibilities to join ministerial staffs (Prevôt, for example, was given a high position in the Planning Ministry).

The CFDT gave its loyal support to the government in the initial months. The confederation put forth its priorities — increases in the SMIC (minimum wage) and renumerations for the lowest-paid groups, reduction of the work week, and new rights for workers — but cautioned against "maximalist" positions that could undermine France's international position (rejecting the CGT call for an immediate 38-hour week, for example). In fact, the CFDT's attempt to take credit for many of the new regime's ideas (the 5-year transition to a 35-hour week, a gradual revaluation of the SMIC, etc.) led to charges that the confederation had become the government's transmission belt. Maire's "cry of anger" on October 14, 1981 — complaining about the regime's laxity

29. Claude Sardais, "La CFDT: un syndicat venu d'ailleurs," *Les Temps Modernes*, No. 430 (May 1982), p. 2006.

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in promoting basic reforms (notably in labor law) and its abandonment of the pre-electoral pledge to freeze nuclear power construction — served to reassure CFDT militants that the union would maintain its independent stance.

This outburst from the CFDT Secretary General (noted for his penchant to act as "lesson giver" to the Left) marked a certain turning point in CFDT strategy, i.e., a more active promotion of its project for a French "post social-democracy" (to employ the terminology of the CFDT, Rocardian theoretican Rosanvallon).[30] In August 1979, Maire in an interview with Fejtö, had attempted to distinguish the CFDT *autogestionnaire* socialist project from classical social-democracy.[31] First, while North European social-democracy saw the state, backed by the trade unions as the motor of change, the CFDT placed its emphasis on the role of social movements. Second, social-democracy maintained a certain "productivist logic" and a "blind faith" in the utility of technological progress; the CFDT, on the other hand, believed that economic growth in today's world had become problematic and that the new questions were "what to produce and how to produce?" Up until Fall 1981 this conception of socialism remained vague in terms of how it related to measures that a Left government could immediately undertake. In October 1981, however, in an interview with Rosanvallon and Thibaud, Maire, fearing that the CFDT project had not sufficiently entered into the discourse of the socialist political Left and that the regime was embarking on a statist vision of social change, attempted to spell out a series of compromises that would provide the glue of a new socialist France: with the state, the patronat, the working class, and Europe and the Third World.[32]

*Compromise with the state.* This compromise had two key components relative to the trade unions' role in the nationalized firms. First, the planning ministry, the nationalized firm administration, local administrations, and "social actors" (trade unions) were all to be involved in laying out a new industrial strategy that would correspond to local and national economic needs (Renault, for example, was to be encouraged to develop the machine tool industry). Second, the workers were to be given new authority within the nationalized firms through the establishment of shop councils. These councils would have authority to intervene in questions of the organization of work, working conditions, changes in technology, working hours, and, later on, product development. Maire argued, however, that workers did not yet have the expertise to intervene in issues relative to commercial strategy, investments, or technological development — these would be much later steps along the long road to self-management.

*Compromise with the patronat.* Maire pointed to the debate going on within the Left, especially between the CFDT and CGT, as to what place the private sec-

30. Pierre Rosanvallon, *La Crise de l'Etate-providence* (Paris: Seuil, 1981).

31. Edmond Maire, "Quel socialisme autogestionnaire?" *Esprit*, No. 40 (April 1980), pp. 61-70.

32. Edmond Maire, "Promouvoir une dynamique sociale," *Esprit*, No. 58-59 (October-November 1981), pp. 177-93.

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tor would have under the new regime. He strongly criticized those who placed all emphasis on the public sector and either ignored or sought to "bring to their knees" the vast majority of firms not nationalized. Instead, it was necessary to "bring the *patrons* around to a positive vision by creating a social dynamic that would force them to view the future in terms of job creation, investment, and the like." This worked at several levels. First, the institution of new rights for trade unions (access to information, legal protections, etc.) and the legal obligation for discussions between employers and union representatives on key issues (work contract, wages, working hours and conditions, etc.) were needed to give impetus to collective bargaining. Second, local employment committees were to be set up that would bring together employers, unions, and local authorities to retool failing industries and help launch new sectors of activity (with the help of the state in the form of public sector employment and bank loans). Third, as spontaneous get-togethers of these social partners were unlikely given traditional employer reticence, the state would have to "impulse" the process by setting the framework for discussions (using *lois cadres* for example).

*Compromise with the working class.* One of the CFDT's major themes in the 1978-81 period had been the "break-up of the working class," i.e., the development of a dual labor market, wherein a large percentage of workers had low wages, precarious jobs, and lack of trade union representation. Given the long term nature of the economic crisis, there could be no automatic return to full and highly paid employment: instead, the social wage bill and employment had to be shared between workers. This would mean in practice: 1) raising of the real wages of the lowest paid (i.e., those making less than twice the SMIC) and holding constant the wages of the better off, and 2) reducing the work week (without automatic wage compensation) in order to stimulate new hiring. The CFDT put this forward in the name of reducing inequalities and counterposed its position to the "corporatist" evil (identified with the CGT) which would push for unrealistic increases across the board. Finally, as there existed a concomitant crisis of the welfare state, those who had previously escaped paying contributions to social security programs (notably civil sevants and professionals with regard to unemployment insurance) would have to contribute their fair share.

*Compromise with Europe and the Third World.* The CFDT did not leave out international considerations from its project. European unions should coordinate their actions (on wages, reduction in work hours, etc.) so as to harmonize socical policy and industrial development to best meet the challenges of Japan and the U.S. In addition, they should help elaborate a new form of cooperation between the advanced countries and the Third World.[33]

Three observations should be made as to the nature of this new social compromise put forth by the CFDT. First, in keeping with the 1978-81 policy of *recentrage*, Maire stressed that this compromise would be of a contractual

33. The CFDT in the 1978-81 period, for instance, had initiated discussions with the DGB (German union confederation) over moving to a 35-hour week in tandem.

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nature: contract between the Plan, nationalized firms, localties, and social partners on industrial strategy; contract between nationalized firm administration and shop councils as to their responsibilities; contracts (of a sort between privileged workers and deprived workers as to the former's contribution to social solidarity, and agreements at the European and international levels between unions and between governments. This desire to move toward a contractual society, which entailed a system of mutual obligations, seemed a long way from the CFDT's post-1968 vision of collective agreements as a temporary truce in the ongoing class struggle and a means to undo the capitalist system.[34]

Second, the trade unions would play perhaps the central role in this scenario. They would have a hand in formulating national industrial policy, in negotiating with public sector and private sector employers over working conditions, wages and hours, the use of new technologies, etc., in promoting job creating activities in conjunction with local authorities, in harmonizing working class demands, and even in formulating international economic policy. Although the CFDT made much of giving a direct voice to workers to stimulate new productivity, it is clear that the unions are to act as the force of proposition. Maire was not discouraged by the failure of *recentrage* in the 1978-81 period, going so far as to claim that the CFDT's constructive role for the unions (in contrast to the CGT's supposed negativism), precisely because it had met with employer opposition, showed what was possible under a new regime backed by a new social mobilization.[35]

Third, an implicit recognition was accorded to the role of the state. The state had to push through new rights for unions and wage-earners in the firms and obligatory collective bargaining, had to fix the parameters of discussion of major issues that would be given form through collective bargaining (the progression toward the 35-hour week for example), had to use the plan as one means of defining industrial strategy and promoting new R & D, had to rationalize the public sphere so as to create jobs and ameliorate the welfare state apparatus, etc. While the CFDT could not deny the state a role, what it really wanted, in Fossaert's words, was "*plus d'etat et moins d'etat.*" In other words, the state was to be responsible for setting broad national priorities and for stimulating the social dynamic that would lead France out of the crisis. Only this new role could break the old habits of "recourse to the state" that had hamstrung industrial relations, promoted corporatist tendencies, generated a fiscal crisis, and threatened to destabilize the relation between state and civil society.

Finally, the CFDT project was not explicitly anti-capitalist. What the CFDT advocated was a "non-capitalist issue" from the crisis that would avoid the dangers of the neo-liberal solution (with its generation of social tensions and authoritarianism) or a false radicalization (founded on *dirigisme* and protectionism and thus inherently undemocratic). There was no single rupture with

34. *Syndicalisme* (December 24, 1969).
35. Edmond Maire, "Promouvoir une dynamique sociale," *op. cit.*, p. 178.

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capitalism, but rather a gradual process of ruptures in many spheres: economic, social, cultural, etc.[36]

How well has the CFDT succeeded in implementing this project, which it acknowledged to be alien to the discourse of the other major Left organizations? Events in the Fall of 1981 offered some initial encouragement. In an October 1981 interview, Delors (Finance Minister) acknowledged his intellectual debt to the CFDT in his call for unions to take their rightful place in social relations (saying no other advanced country so denied unions their place and warning against the danger otherwise of another May 1968).[37] In July 1981 the government had promoted an *accord-cadre* that set the agenda for sector-by-sector discussions between unions and employers on reduction of the work week to 39 hours. In addition, after the initial wave of structural reforms from above, the government began to acknowledge the necessity for more voluntary action, including appeals to the private sector for job creation. Mauroy set out on a national tour to promote "contracts of solidarity" that would trade government investment funds for pledges to undertake job creating activities. Finally, in November 1982, Auroux, the Minister of Labor, began to speak out on proposals to reform the labor code that addressed many of the CFDT's concerns.

Despite these initial optimistic (for the CFDT) signs, problems soon began to set in. Employers maintained at best a negative wait-and-see attitude toward the government, limiting the acceptance of "contracts of solidarity" and local employment committees. The biggest problem was that of the 39-hour week. Employers had insisted on linking the issue to the restructuring of working time as a whole and began to try to evade the reduction by cutting back on rest periods, tightening up on arrival and departure times, increasing night work, etc. A major dispute broke out, too, on the issue of wage compensation, i.e., which workers if any would have their wages reduced to compensate for the shorter hours and create incentives for hiring. Numerous social conflicts broke out over these issues, with local CFDT officials not always lining up with the national leadership. While the CFDT national leadership insisted on non-compensation to create incentives for new jobs, the government initially wavered (Mauroy seemingly leaning toward the CFDT position) and finally came out in favor of full compensation for all wage-earners (the PS left and PCF/CGT arguing against any rollbacks of working-class gains and the necessity to maintain popular consumption levels).

With respect to new trade union powers, the Auroux laws, although hotly challenged by the Right, did accord new powers to labor: trade union and personnel representives were given legal protection and access to information, health and safety committees were strengthened, obligatory discussion was implemented at the firm level on wages, working conditions, hours, etc., and workers were given new rights to self-expression. But there were major omissions. The government was hesitant to alienate medium size firms where

36. Edmond Maire, "Quel socialisme autogestionnaire," *op. cit.*, p. 66.
37. Jacques Delors, "Pourquoi nous battons," *Nouvel Observateur* (October 24, 1981).

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trade unionism was traditionally viewed with outright hostility; the rights to self-expression and the obligatory negotiation were not extended to the many firms of less than 50 employees. Furthermore, the obligatory annual talks did not imply commitment to reaching agreements, and it thus remained to be seen whether serious discussion would take place. Finally, there was relative silence on the shop councils sought by the CFDT (and the CGT) — the unions were to negotiate with those firms of 200 plus employees on the modes of worker self-expression.

The CFDT's themes of social solidarity failed to take root among the working population. In November 1981, the CFDT recognized that its pronouncements were either misunderstood or, if accepted, not properly credited. While the leadership had hoped that these themes would strike a favorable chord among OS, women, young people, and workers in small firms (those in the unprotected labor market), it had to acknowledge that there had been no mass influx of these groups into CFDT ranks.[38] Moreover, although these themes had originally gained a certain audience among the general public, this seemed to recede with the worsening economic situation. A poll taken in September 1981 showed 74% of respondents putting reduction of unemployment as the top governmental priority as against only 22% favoring instead the maintenance of purchasing power. In addition, 56% expressed their willingness to accept a decrease in their purchasing power in exchange for reduction of unemployment.[39] In a January 1983 poll, 85% of workers interviewed came out in favor of an *increase* in purchasing power as a top government priority.[40]

There was even grumbling among CFDT ranks. Although the 39th Congress held in May 1982 did not prove to be the battle that had been expected, numerous complaints were aired of CFDT policy. There was considerable bitterness about the July 17, 1981 agreement on the 39-hour week, as many weak sectors had been unable to reach any accord with management and had been thrown on the defensive (notably clothing and health care workers). There was also considerable discussion of the CFDT's continuing refusal to negotiate any unity of action pact with the CGT: even Eugène Descamps, retired former general secretary, was forced to speak out on its urgency to strengthen the unions' bargaining position and heal rifts within the working class.[41] Social solidarity was yet another sensitive issue: Maire's most vehement critics accused him of redistributing power and income on a new austerity basis within the working class. Civil servant unions acknowledged their obligations in contributing to social insurance funds but felt that other groups too (professionals, etc.) also should be forced to pay. Finally, accusations arose as to the lack of union democracy. Local militants complained of learning about the CFDT line only through reading in the national media of Maire's most

38. "Une image favorable mais flou," *CFDT Magazine*, No. 55 (November 1981), pp. 12-13.
39. *Nouvel Observateur* (October 3, 1981).
40. "La classe ouvriere juge la gauche," *L'Expansion* (February 4-17, 1983), p. 43.
41. *Le Monde* (May 16-17, 1982).

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recent "cries of anger." Nevertheless, the *quitus* received 60% approval and the leadership was only reversed on the issue of wage compensation for reduction in working hours (the Congress mandating that there should be no wage reductions for those making less than twice the SMIC).

More serious problems were posed to the CFDT strategy by the continuing deterioration in France's economy. The "pause" undertaken by the Mauroy government in April 1982 became a wage-price freeze in June. The CFDT complained loudly, labelling it undemocratic (contrary to the 1950 law on free collective bargaining which was temporarily suspended) and inegalitarian (hurting the lowest paid workers the most by delaying promised wage increases). By early 1983 the situation looked to call for even more drastic measures, despite Mauroy's appeals to "stay the course." The CFDT saw a pitched battle looming between the "realists" and "radicals" within the governmental coalition: the former calling for work sharing (to reduce unemployment) and belt-tightening in order to reduce inflation and prevent further deterioration of the currency or aggravation of the balance of payments; the latter calling for a national response to the crisis through another "reconquest of the internal market" coupled with promotion of industrial growth and protectionist measures (including withdrawal from the European monetary system) to gain breathing space to restructure the French economy. Maire's intervention in the debate in early February 1983 was designed to throw the CFDT weight behind the "realists" while pushing to the forefront CFDT concerns about low wage scales, work sharing, etc. The CFDT leadership clearly fears the other solution would lead to a much more statist dynamic and reduce the manueverability of the unions.

In the wake of the ministerial shake-up following the 1983 municipal elections, the CFDT finds itself trapped between a "*Barrisme de gauche*" and a radical, statist protectionism. Its plan for a new dynamic social compromise giving the unions a central role has not yet come to pass given the economy's international difficulties, the employers' intransigence, trade union division, and working class passivity. In the absence of any new social mobilization, the CFDT is left without any choice but to send messages to the government and court its allies within the ministries in the hopes that someday its project will become hegemonic within the Left.[42]

Is, as Cohen indicates, the real question facing the Left today not the alternative between reform or revolution but rather the dialectic between reform from above (through state action) and innovation from below (through social movements)?[43] The CFDT has been the major force on the French Left to pose the tough questions (the viability of the productivist, growth-oriented strategy, the recomposition/decomposition of the working class, etc.) that challenge the core of traditional Left logic. And the CFDT has tried to elaborate responses that would give a prime importance to social movements. One

42. As Portelli argues, in his article in this issue of *Telos*, the PS leadership has a much more statist conception of neo-social democracy in mind.

43. See her article in this issue of *Telos*.

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can commend this effort to clarify the debate.

Maire, and other confederal leaders, has been forthright in proclaiming the CFDT's aspiration to be a motor of social change. The union is to be the nexus where the working class movement and new social movements come together to formulate a new social project and revive civil society. These are noble goals to be sure but bringing this off in the current period marked by working class passivity and the invisibility of social movements is highly problematic. Furthermore, the CFDT's attempt to rethink political strategy itself generates new ambiguities.

First, the solutions to the crisis proposed by the CFDT (new social solidarity, a new type of growth, etc.) presuppose strong trade union bargaining power for their realization — something the French unions historically have not possessed and the Auroux reforms may not provide. In a situation of union weakness, the "solutions" put forth by the CFDT may not only be blocked by the French *patronat* but may actually be turned against the workers if it is the *patronat* and not the unions that sets the terms of negotiation (as we have seen was the case with the reduction in the work week). Historically, French unions have been able to bargain from a position of strength only during "hot" periods (1936, 1947, 1968, or even 1971-73) when they could ride the wave of rank-and-file revolt. As even the CFDT itself points out, current rank-and-file revolts are periodic, disunified, and defensive in nature.

Second, the CFDT, for all its criticism of the parties' attempt to subordinate the trade unions, seems to assume the role of "social vanguard." While the CFDT has been more supportive of worker self-expression at the workplace than other forces on the Left,[44] their current project puts the emphasis on increasing *union* power — something not likely to generate much enthusiasm among state managers, employers, or even workers who have yet to see how this will benefit them (in the 1983 poll, only 42% of the workers interviewed called for state action to increase trade union power).[45] The CFDT, moreover, has not specified how increasing trade union contractual power would help promote worker self-expression or give new life to social movements. And it has shied away from the question of what would happen if the aspirations expressed by workers directly in the new councils or by social movements came into conflict with the aims of the trade union movement. Finally, the CFDT, like other enthusiasts of social movements, has failed to specify how actions undertaken by social movements would be articulated with reforms from above, i.e, with *state* power. Slogans like "*plus d'Etat et moins d'Etat*" do not suffice.

While the CFDT's innovative trade unionism may be attractive in principle, it needs to be asked whether, in trying to play the role of *cavalier seul* on the French Left, the CFDT is not overreaching its possibilities. Yet, it may be asked, what other choices does it have?

44. See the article by Daniel Mothè in this issue of *Telos*.
45. "La classe ouvriere juge la gauche," *op. cit.*

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# WHAT PROSPECTS FOR DEMOCRACY AT THE WORKPLACE?*

## by Daniel Mothé

*Participatory Experiments in France Prior to May 1981.*

Nearly all participatory experiments in France prior to May 1981 were employer-sponsored, which meant that in principle they met with opposition from the trade unions. In a few cases, company unions joined in such experiments and sometimes directed them. Usually such experiments entailed granting some power, initiative and decision-making to workers on very specific and circumscribed issues. These experiments took several forms such as: 1) Research Groups on Improving Working Conditions (ERACT), established by the employer's federation of the mining and metallurgical industries (UIMM) in the 1970s, whose task was to develop, in cooperation with workers, measures for improving working conditions; 2) Quality Circles, which are based on Japanese models; 3) Progress Circles, which are essentially a combination of the ERACT and Quality Circles; 4) Operational Teams, which are inter-categorical groups with worker presence set up to resolve specific problems; 5) Autonomous or Semi-Autonomous Groups, in which workers collectively manage and organize some of their work.

The objectives behind the formation of these groups has been clearly laid out in employer publications and at business group congresses. These objectives can be summarized as follows: 1) Social: to improve relations between workers and management, create a climate of confidence, provide motivation for work, and reduce absenteeism; 2) Political: to bypass union representatives, especially the plant steward [*délégué du personnel*], by establishing face-to-face contact between workers and supervisors on the basis of some sort of democratic relation and by allocating power to supervisors to provide workers with the same services offered by the stewards; 3) Economic: to solicit worker self-expression through these participatory forms in order to increase productivity, stimulate technological innovation, improved product quality, and reduce waste.

*The Current for Democratization of the Workplace Within the Labor Movement.*

Self-management, which had once so divided the socialist and communist Left, by May 1981 had become the common theme of not only the Left parties but also the two major union confederations, the CGT and CFDT.[1] It should

*Translated by David J. Parent and Richard Shryock.

1. The General Confederation of Labor (CGT), the largest union confederation, is run by members of the Communist Party. The French Democratic Confederation of Labor (CFDT) was born with the deconfessionalization of the French Confederation of Christian Workers (CFTC) in 1964. This confederation, whose influence is less than that of the CGT, is dominated by a modernist socialist current but includes more radical tendencies within its ranks.



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be pointed out, however, that self-management can be situated primarily within the sphere of ideology: *autogestion* is not imbued with any practical application in the here and now but reserved for a time when capitalism has been abolished and socialism is being constructed. Although self-management is viewed as *utopian* and not as an *operating strategy* by the Left, nevertheless the recognition that the worker is a true partner capable of generating change is central to this discourse.

To sum up the situation on the eve of May 10, 1981, we can say that the social partners, at least in their official discourse, saw the need to give some recognition to workers on the shop floor.[2] However, this recognition had such divergent *ideological sources* that negotiation at the work place on this issue was often stalemated. Thus, employers rejected the Left's self-management ideology just as the unions repudiated employer-sponsored participatory schemes.

*Legislation Backing Off From Ideology.*

The coming to power of the Left has begun to effect a certain number of politico-cultural transformations within managerial and trade union ranks. This change has been brought about in part by legislation[3] that institutes a form of worker democracy on the shop floor through the form of a right to self-expression. This new legislation can be interpreted as the common denominator of the two currents present at the workplace, i.e., employer-sponsored participation and union-sponsored self-management. The principal clauses of this legislation are the following: 1) Article L.461-5: "all employees, including supervisory personnel, of a shop or office shall be deemed to constitute a work unit and as such will enjoy the right to meet in a shop- or office-council. They shall meet by shop or office at least quarterly and no less than a total of six hour yearly. The employees may express their views on all matters relating to the operation of the shop or office." 2) Article L.461-6: "The stipulations in the accords cited in Article L.461-3 must be supplemented by agreements treating the following subjects: a) The definition of the work units to be considered as the framework for meetings of the shop- and office-councils (these units must be small in size); b) The role of supervisory personnel in the organization of such meetings; c) The extent of competence of the shop- and office-councils, which must encompass the consequences that firm activities an investments will have on the conditions and organization of work in the shop or office; d) The method and form of intervention of the shop and office councils; e) The liaison between meetings [of the councils] to be established with firm management and with elected personnel representatives either through the mediation of the latter or through

2. The idea of having workers participate in decision-making can be found in publications and congress proceedings of both employer groups and the CGT and CFDT. Other union confederations (*Force Ouvrière and the Confédération Générale des Cadres*) are hostile to this form of democratization.

3. This legislation stemmed from a series of consultations with interested parties with the CFDT and labor sociologists playing an especially important role.

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other forms judged more appropriate at the firm-level." 3) Article L.461-7: "The firm's director is to prepare an annual report on the activity of the shop or office councils and present this to the plant committee [*comité d'entreprise*] or some other appropriate organ."

This law is very consistent with France's centralized tradition, which has given the state a key role in the relation of employers and unions. In comparison with employer-sponsored experiments, it can be seen as a step backwards since no decision-making power is granted to workers. It can be considered an even greater mockery with respect to self-management texts since the council meetings are limited to six per year. The law does not stipulate the procedures for these assemblies, leaving this up to employers and unions to negotiate. For the first time in history, then, employers and unions are called upon to negotiate in common this shop-floor worker democracy.[4]

On closer inspection, however, even a law as weak as this one does introduce some worker input which will be difficult to ignore; the juridical framework does not obligate either management or the unions to take such input into account. The institutional importance of this legislation is that it will alter the bipartite negotiation between the two traditional social partners — unions and management — by introducing a third agent capable of putting forth a project, i.e., workers. The *binary* system of negotiation, which has long characterized industrial relations in industrialized countries, may or will evolve into a *triadic* system. The existence of a third player will inevitably pose the problem of alliance strategy, which is absent in a binary system.

It should be emphasized that even such a watered-down law introduces a new bargaining complexity in social relations. Structurally, it will tend to replace what is essentially a relation of forces with an alliance system and increased bargaining. In a "binary" system the stronger party imposes the most advantageous compromise; in a "triad," however, power relations must be preceded by an alliance in which the third party is won over to one camp (cf. Caplow's theory, 1968). This forces the partners to negotiate and can produce agreements between management and unions in the social domain, which has traditionally been characterized by competition between the two, i.e., employers utilizing paternalism and unions resorting to conflict.

The legislation on self-expression groups [GE or *groupes d'expression*] thus could open up a new terrain of negotiation since shop-floor actors will be able to speak for themselves in a new language — not necessarily confined to either opposition or assent — that may foster the emergence of an alternative project.[5]

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4. This legislation is similar in tone to the July 1971 legislation on continuous education. In the latter case, the legislation called upon union and employer organizations to co-administer the funds for employee education/training.

5. The masses have often been considered by employers and unions alike as infantry: either productive infantry loyally obeying the orders of management or combat infantry fighting the system under the direction of the unions.

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*The Employers' Stance.*

With the publication of the Auroux report by the Ministry of Labor, which laid out the basic orientation of the legislation on democratization of the workplace, employers and company unions mobilized to come up with a policy alternative to this trade union inspired law (especially by the CFDT). The Auroux report aroused managerial fears with respect to another facet of the proposed legislation, i.e., the strengthening of trade union power that would come about through the increase in hours set aside for trade union work and especially through the obligatory annual negotiation between management and labor.

The section concerning the right of employees to direct and collective self-expression "on the organization of their work and on the elaboration and implementation of actions designed to improve working conditions at the workplace" was not out of line with management-sponsored participatory experiments, since the new provisions would also establish a direct relation between workers and management without obligatory trade union mediation. However, the clause stipulating that "the methods for exercising this right to self-expression are to be defined through an agreement concluded between management and union organizations with representation at the [individual] workplace" engendered managerial fear that personnel representatives would alter considerably the management-run schemes which in most cases granted supervisors the power to regulate these groups.

Business executives since early 1982 have feared a trade union offensive aimed at opening up these negotiations and imposing a union-conceived model. As mentioned above, however, the union conception of *autogestion* is not only vague but also differs between the CGT and the CFDT. The unions thus have no model to serve as reference when negotiating the new rules and, for this reason, have exhibited great prudence and avoided putting forth propositions, contrary to management's expectations.

Union passivity so calmed management's initial fears that, soon after the labor legislation was passed on August 14, 1982, management revived participatory experiments (quality and progress circles) and even initiated them in firms where they had not previously been tested. This policy was accompanied by special training for supervisors designed to prepare them for an animating or even leading role in the future GE. Whereas one might have expected a left-sponsored law to force management to establish a genuine bargaining relationship with the unions, what happened instead was a race of sorts in which employers jockeyed to be in the most favorable position when negotiations actually began on the GE on February 4, 1983.

In point of fact, the policy adopted by the National Council of French Employers (CNPF) has varied considerably over the past twenty years. Prior to May 1968, the CNPF followed a policy of avoiding contact with labor unions, circumventing legal guidelines, persecuting plant-level union representatives, and even, in certain large firms, fostering "house" (company) unions

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responsible for carrying out company social policy in the hopes of preventing conflict situations. In the wake of the 1968 events, the CNPF over the next ten years sought to come to some sort of broad accord with the two major unions, i.e., the CGT and CFDT, without notable success.

This policy failure led the CNPF to pursue a social policy outside union channels after 1977. Most participatory experiments were thus developed with but one goal in mind: to use the hierarchical structure to deal with problems relating to workers, whether in the domain of working conditions or employee grievances. The majority of the participatory experiments were carried out in a paternalistic fashion and served to strengthen the power of management, especially that of supervisors. It was this employer strategy that paradoxically regained a certain vigor just as the new labor code was being voted on by parliament.

*Managerial Staff and Supervisors*

Managerial staff seem much more favorable to the employers' conception of workplace democratization than they do to the Auroux law. In fact, relations between managerial staff and supervisory personnel, on the one hand, and the two major working-class unions (CGT and CFDT), on the other, have always been difficult when not conflictual.

The absence of a strong union presence in private firms forces union representatives to enter their activity on the day-to-day defense of wage earners. One fundamental element in this policy of defense consists of *challenging* managerial decisions over which the unions have no control. Labor representatives are thus drawn into a policy of opposition to the managerial hierarchy and to its front line, i.e., supervisory personnel. This explains in large part why such occupational groups are unionized by the CGC.[6]

In this situation, the supervisor's authority is bypassed through appeals to union representatives, which attempt to resolve grievances by negotiating with service or personnel managers. Such a situation pushes supervisors and managerial staff to support an employer policy designed to strengthen their power rather than a policy option that would serve the labor representatives seen as their competitors. The plant steward, who is in constant contact with upper-level management, is a mediator in direct competition with supervisors, which also forces the latter to adopt a critical attitude toward regulations that would ostensibly reinforce union power.

Such opposition on the part of managerial staff does not mean that this occupational group enthusiastically supports employer-sponsored participatory schemes. Any participatory arrangements entail some new *relational functions* which, added to other responsibilities, would have to be undertaken in a democratic and permissive climate which supervisors have a difficult time adjusting to. The training undergone by supervisory staff has been predicatd on hierarchic power relations, i.e., respecting orders issued form above and ensuring execution of those orders by workers. Any form of participation,

6. The General Confederation of Supervisory Staff (*Confédération Générale des Cadres, CGC*) organizes only middle and upper-level management.

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even employer-sponsored, on the contrary, necessitates different modes of behavior, even more difficult to accept when such participation constitutes just a small island within the overall functioning of the firm. This prospective thus does not comfort supervisors, given their position in the production process, where they are often subject to harassment.

Supervisory staff therefore more often allies with union and employer conservatives than with those advocating schemes for democratization of the workplace, whether the latter be modernist employers or the CFDT.[7] Supervisors will be much more likely to reinforce to conservative power of the employer, which safeguards the supervisor's power and status, than to endorse Left reforms that tend to strengthen union power and arbitration mechanisms. Plant stewards, by mediating worker grievances, come into direct competition with the supervisory staff.

*The Workers*

The Left came to power during a period of major decline in union membership. Although official spokesmen for the major confederations are wont to admit the extent of these losses, union representatives and militants, often more vocal, confirm this trend. The profound division within the French Left prior to the 1981 elections also provoked a gradual attrition of union militants. Demobilization and scepticism on the part of militants coincided with the de-unionization of workers. This was only partially checked at the time of the 1981 elections, as some workers now preferred to join the ranks of a Socialist Party in power rather than the unions.

Union influence also diminished in terms of the impact of its discourse. The self-management utopia lost its credibility among the masses (if it ever really had any to begin with). Workers thus content themselves with putting forth demands that they believe can be satisfied, such as wage raises, rather than demands for GE or democratization of the firm. Even when demands to improve working conditions or decrease working hours are advanced, the calls for wage increases or wage stability always have priority.

The conflicts in the Winter and Spring of 1982 bearing on the application of the 39-hour work-week legislation, which often broke out spontaneously, all centered on maintaining wages. No conflicts or major demands over working conditions or worker democracy arose, as these remain vanguard demands advocated by only a minority of union militants (almost exclusively CFDT members). Thus, unlike the Italian case during the 1969 "hot autumn," no grass-roots push for shop-floor democracy has emerged in France.

*The Trade Unions.*

Union positions on the issue of democratization can be grouped in three categories. Union representatives in the first current reacted in a way reminiscent of that of management, i.e., they feared loss of some of their (representa-

7. The two union confederations most hostile to shop-floor democratization are the CGC and *Force Ouvriére.* The latter confederation originated as a split-off with the CGT in 1947 and now brings together the most conformist and least combative currents of the labor movement.

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tive) power. This type of reaction can be seen in various guises, such as in the following arguments: 1) workers will be manipulated by supervisors into supporting management's policies; 2) a dialogue with supervisory personnel will result in greater acceptance of firm objectives on the part of workers; 3) the workers, left to themselves, may take up positions in opposition to those advocated by union confederations.

In the light of such a reading of the situation, this group of trade unionists proposes regulations relative to the GE that would give control to labor representatives (such as the presence of union representatives at all GE meetings). Given France's conflictual and pluralist unionism, this would entail the presence of two or more union delegates at GE meetings, depending upon which confederations had representation at a given firm. In addition, to avoid any managerial retaliation against workers who might criticize their supervisors in GE meetings, such complaints would be made instead to union delegates who, in turn, would voice them anonymously in the GE meetings. The GE thus would work through a system of indirect representation. Finally, certain proposals even call for management to allocate additional meeting time in order to prepare for the GE. Thus a preliminary meeting would take place between workers and union representatives as a prelude for the broader GE meeting, where supervisory staff would be present. This category of trade unionists reflects the official position put forth by *Force Ouvrière*, even if some may belong to the CFDT or the CGT. The point of commonality is the belief that workers are as yet unprepared to put forth any realistic proposals of their own.

A second current within the union movement, while also very concerned with protecting trade union power, proposes much more centralized regulations. The CGT is the principal force behind these ideas. The demands put forth closely parallel the regulations elaborated in conjunction with the Le Garrec law relative to the nationalized sector, which were promised in the wake of the 1981 presidential election. This legislation, not yet (as of this writing) presented for discussion in parliament, envisions a system of indirect democracy in which shop council representatives would have power parallel to that of management and would be represented in the administrative council of the firm. This group thus advocates a type of co-management [*cogestion*] in the nationalized sector. All economic and political decisions would be made in organs where unions had representation. They focus their attention on investment decisions, industrial policies, new product design, and control of industrial licensing/patents.

Thus, the system proposed by the Auroux legislation relative to the GE is viewed with derision and considered a constricted idea of labor democracy. The fact that the government no longer considers the Le Garrec legislation as a major priority encourages this group to push to transform the Auroux law into a system of representative democracy, supplementing shop-floor democracy with negotiation at the summit.

Finally, a third current, emanating almost exclusively from the CFDT, takes

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up the basist conceptions of May 1968 and opposes any tutelage over the GE whether exercised by employee representatives or trade union organs. Militants of this school believe that workers are endowed with a certain competence and are capable of expressing their concerns themselves. They do not share the fear that the GE will weaken union power. On the contrary, some believe that face-to-face dialogue between workers and supervisory staff will increase the responsibility of labor representatives and liberate them from their maternal role, i.e., the role in "social assistance" which the present system forces plant stewards to play and which is viewed with increasing discomfort. Others believe that shop-floor expression will allow union members to take greater interest in the internal life of the union itself.[8]

*Prospects for Future Debate on Democratization of the Firm*

All work to date on democratization of the production process at the workplace indicates that the introduction and recognition of a new agent on the shop-floor would have a disruptive impact on both management and unions. This hypothesis of *perturbation* is confirmed by recent experience.[9] The GE in a participatory system would have to take up both technical and organizational concerns that have been the domain of hierarchical (management) and functional (technicians) groups and would thus engender at least initial resistance. These GE would also have to deal with such questions as occupational safety and working conditions, which have been the terrain of bipartite organs (such as the health and safety committees and the committees on working conditions). This will put elected employee representatives in a paradoxical situation, as there may be two discourses on a given issue, i.e., one emanating directly from the workers and another from their appointed representatives. In cases where the discourses complement each other (as envisaged by the Auroux report), no problem should occur. However, a perturbation will become manifest if the discourses appear different, an eventuality that encourages unions to oppose such direct democracy (as clearly stated by FO).

To this hypothesis should be added two additional hypotheses relative to the difficulties inherent in negotiating the new rules. The first concerns the *inequality in negotiation* on this issue, which places the two social partners in different situations (independent of the balance of power consideration). On the employer side, we thus find groups with both an ideology and a model: the previous participatory experiements (ERACT, quality circles, progress circles, etc.) will serve as models for employers and counter-models for unions. On the union side, however, we find groups with an ideology but no model.[10] The union confederations (CGT and CFDT) long ago abandoned reference to foreign models, be they Soviet, Yugoslav, or Algerian. Nevertheless, the

8. Hugo Blassel, "Droits des travailleurs et droits syndicaux: contraintes et contradictions," *CFDT Aujourd'hui*, No. 58 (November-December 1982), p. 28.

9. Jacques Gautrait, *L'effet perturbateur de la participation* (Paris: CORDES, 1980).

10. The Italian work-teams established in Fall 1969 do not seem as attractive to the CFDT as they once did in 1972.

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unions still seem attracted by the politico-ideological project represented by *autogestion.*

Thus, although the Auroux legislation is union inspired, the absence of a concrete union model will most likely enable employers to act once again as the primary force of proposition and throw the unions onto the defensive, i.e., pushing each social partner back to their original role. At any rate, the near total absence of any social movement or grass-roots support for this demand will reinforce these tendencies.

Finally, we want to analyze the positive or negative influence that the *raison d'etat* may have on negotiations over the GE. This is especially important as the left government is beset by an economic crisis, the recognition of which has forced French unions to line up with their European counterparts in accepting the need for a competitive economy and a limitation on wage increases.

A *positive hypothesis* relative to the GE negotiations would have the unions putting forth proposals to reinforce direct democracy. This would lessen the danger of a disintegration of the national industrial fabric through a policy of "national union at the base." A *negative hypothesis* postulates union tutelage over the GE. The unions would then seek out top-level negotiations with management to promote a productivist path similar to that followed during the 1945 crisis.[11] In sum, it is a question of whether the perturbation engendered by direct democracy at the workplace will be surmounted by a *raison d'etat* or whether the latter will only act as an additional impetus toward forestalling direct democracy measures.[12]

The legislation in question corresponds to a demand for democratizing the productive apparatus that originated in the European scene of the 1970s, i.e., before the effects of the crisis. However, this legislation is now being put forward in an entirely different context, when the effects of the crisis are serious. The solidarity of the unions with the government in the face of the crisis alters the problematic. Under these conditions, the legislation on workplace democratization may seem secondary to these partners in comparison to the problematic of a crisis which assumes ever increasing priority.

This union-government solidarity in the face of the crisis will, for the second time in French history, work in favor of some type of co-management of the firm. Two scenarios can be put forward which are not mutually exclusive. First, a type of *co-management from above* might emerge which would resemble the situation at the workplace between 1945-47 at which time union officials and management, often through the intermediary of the plant committee, collaborated on policies for increasing productivity.[13] Shop-floor democracy

11. This would entail control of investments, foreign licenses and commercial policy. This seems to be the policy followed by the CGT in the nationalized sector.

12. Employers often used the same sort of argument against social policies proposed by the unions and parliament.

13. This was the policy carried out by the CGT in particular which, at the time, was the most important confederation and had near monopoly representation of manual workers. Its policy centered primarily on productivism through work intensity ("rolling up one's sleeves," overtime,

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would thus be replaced by an entente at the summit, with the related risk that such deals could not control conflicts at the base (as was the case with the 1947 strikes).[14]

Another possibility is a form of *co-management at the base*, corresponding more closely to the spirit of the Auroux legislation, which would entail collective undertakings between workers and managerial staff, with support from personnel representatives, to promote innovation in terms of product quality, technology, work, organization, productivity and conflict regulation.

French unionism maintains a conflictual tradition. Conflict is not only articulated with the guiding ideology of "class struggle" but also intimately related to the capacities and praxis of union militants. It will thus be difficult to move from a conflictual culture and practice toward strategies of cooperation not only with public authorities but also with management and supervisory personnel at the workplace. It is unlikely then that there will be a rapid transition from a conflictual culture to a cooperative or consensual one but rather a transfer in areas of conflict. Certain statements emanating from the union press so indicate. Thus, the class enemy is no longer the capitalist but the bad employer who does not sufficiently invest, manages poorly, and is not competitive. Similarly, the enemy is not the capitalist system but rather foreign capitalism. The CGT-initiated campaign to "buy French" goes in this direction and replicates a nationalist culture endemic to the French.

These emerging union policies suggest that the Auroux legislation, which envisions cooperation at the base, may just fit with the new crisis situation in Europe. Thus, the crisis would constitute an element favorable to a democratic restructuring of the firm and not, as is too often claimed, one acting as a brake.

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combatting absenteeism, etc.) rather than through qualitative changes in the organization of work.

14. This strike wave forced the PCF to resign from the government and the CGT to radically change its policy.


# Democratic Socialism

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# THE END OF ADMINISTRATIVE CENTRALIZATION?*

## by Jacques Caroux

France is undergoing a new attempt at decentralization, the first having been that of 1789. This pre-supposes in this society a radical reexamination of those relations between the state and civil society which were progressively instituted through a process of secularization. This reform is being implemented in the absence of social mobilization. The national, territorial and ecological movements are symptomatically quiescent, raising no public debate on this theme, at the very moment that the "pink prince" is stressing, in Gaullian accents, the following "necessity" for French society: "France needed a central power to constitute itself. It needs a decentralized power in order not to deconstitute itself."

Like all previous important changes, decentralization will thus be essentially elaborated by the state and completed by the legislature. An external observer raised on Tocquevillian ideas could thus be quite skeptical about the practical results of this reform. However, the abrogation of administrative tutelage, the revamping of the office of Prefect (now Commissioner of the Republic), and the vote for regional councils on the basis of universal suffrage are signs that demonstrate a genuine decentralizing will of the Socialist government. Yet, is there not a certain paradox in the Left's sponsoring of a project which was linked to the Restoration?

Regionalization and decentralization have long been part of the nebulous ideology of the most conservative Right. The Vichy government deeply tarnished the image of the regionalist project by calling it its own without truly implementing it. In French ideological and institutional tradition, the recourse to a centralized republican state was legitimated by its "progressive" nature vis à vis Catholic conservatism, and territorial traditionalisms, which acted jointly to preserve the privileges of local notables against the corrosive effect of a too brutal modernization. Indeed, the implementation of the decentralization reform will take place in a society deeply modified by more that 30 years of intensive industrialization and urbanization which have radically undermined the basis of local traditionalisms: a society in which regionalist claims no longer have the same cultural and political sense of opposition to national integration. The aim of decentralization is to adapt the politico-administrative system to the new reality of French society.

De Gaulle was able, by Colbertist method, to restore the modernizing role of the state and to establish a regime characterized by the preponderance of the executive, but his project for the reform of local institutions, presented in 1969, failed. Taking up a torch which had been almost extinguished under the

* Translated by David J. Parent.



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two preceding governments (of Pompidou and Giscard d'Estaing), the Socialist government, which regards itself as an active agent for the modernization of French society, wants to make decentralization the great project of its seven-year term. This project, by expanding the possibilities for participation in public affairs and in decisions of local interest, would restore the citizens' confidence in their institutions — a confidence which centralization has increasingly eroded — and thereby launch a new, dynamic mobilization of the population behind the modernizing goals of this government.

*Centralization in France*

The centralizing tradition at work in French society prior to the revolution, which was translated on the political and institutional level into the progressive aggregation of the provinces under the crown of the Île de France, gained rational impetus in 1793, with the coming of Jacobin ideology. What was lost with the victory of the Jacobins was of the abrogation of societies and clubs as a free political space (which was, more generally, *the lost treasure of the 1789 French Revolution*) was the citizens' right to be co-participants in public affairs. The decentralizing spirit aimed at giving France relatively free local institutions. By unifying the "People" and [State] Power, by deifying the "People" — an abstract "people" without any internal consistency or differentiation, whether socio-professional or individual — and by making them the source of the general will, i.e., the law, the 1793 institutions inaugurated a radical adventure. It is in reference to this inaugural act that French society, more in myth than in practice, will continue to legitimate centralization.

It must be recalled that French society has been constituted on the basis of a rejection of one of the fundamental axes of division in all existing societies, i.e., the division between the state and civil society. This came about because of a distrust of any institutional mediator between the people and [State] power. Administrative tutelage over local collectivities should be understood in this sense. As long as all modes of representation of particularized social groups are suspect, such representations will be tolerated only under condition of state control. As Grémion writes, "the state's tutelage is thus exercised over numerous representative institutions through the supervision of a specialized administrator. There is thus a close correspondence between the segmentation of the administrative organizational fabric and the representative institutions."[1]

The identity of people and [State] power, the unification of the state and society, will continue to be firmly anchored in French political culture and will continue to influence the way that the rights of the civil society actors are conceptualized. In French society, these rights are placed under the tutelage of [State] power. There is a veritable absorption of rights by the state. How then can the rights which belong to society and guarantee it a certain autonomy in relation to the law the state apparatus be conceived? As master of the law, the state "becomes the one who establishes and dictates [legality]. It is no longer

1. Pierre Grémion, *Le pouvoir périphérique*, (Seuil: Paris, 1976) p. 320.

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society that has rights but the state that undertakes to fulfill this or that program."[2] And, as Thibaud correctly sees, "this concentration within society through the state and politics — one could even speak of repression of any social expression by the state and politics — tends to denigrate social activities. Various associations and the unions, and with them all that constitutes the everyday life of society, are in principle subordinated and devalued with respect to the political. It thus becomes difficult to admit any independence of unions with respect to the parties, the role of association or that of decentralization in a republic like ours."[3] At the level of society, then such rights at that of socio-geographic communities of citizens to organize and to "be admitted to the sphere of public and political interests" - a right which, as Arendt stresses,was one of the acquisitions of the American Revolution — will never cease to be challenged.

In a country characterized throughout its history by a deep distrust of any mediator between civil society and [State] power, and which has strived to quash all traces of local autonomy, decentralization efforts seem extraordinary events running counter to the political culture and politico-administrative practice. This moreover explains their repeated failure: 1789, 1871, 1887, 1946, 1969. A schematic overview shows that from the monarchy to the Revolution, from the Revolution to Gaullism, the French state never ceased to tighten its grip on civil society, challenging all cultural, institutional and professional mediations and striving to establish direct relations with a mass of separated citizens. This process leads Birnbaum to say that "the state which has been built up in the course of French history appears to be the ideal type of the State."[4] This representation of a Jacobin, hyper-centralized State should be qualified, however since the end of the 19th century French society has forged a system of "notables", which prevented it suffocating under the excessive weight of centralization, that allowed some flexibility in relations between the state and local collectives.

*A Well-Moderated Jacobinism: The "Notables" System*

The reform of local institutions carried out under the Third Republic mitigated Jacobins centralism and led to a type of territorial management that allowed a relatively flexible adjustment between state decisions and local particularisms. Jacobinism was retained as the great mythic reference, but it was attenuated considerably by the politico-administrative system established at the end of the 19th century — a system maintained until the advent of Fifth Republic and to which President Pompidou would turn to dampen the multiple shocks of modernity. What is the nature of this system, whose longevity shows a certain satisfactory articulation between the state and local collectives?

The key institutions are the axes of the reform implemented under the Third Republic: the prefectoral and the municipal institutions. The specificity

2. Paul Thibaud, "Droits de l'homme et culture politique," in *Du Citoyen* (Grenoble, 1981) p. 168.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 170-171.
4. B. Badie and P. Birnbaum,*Sociologie de l'État* (Grasset: Paris, 1979) p. 191.

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of the mode of relations between prefects and the local notables expresses the originality of this new mode of territorial government. "The prefect does not so much command as negotiate state policy with local notables. Behind the majesty of his function, embodying the unity and centralizing will of the State, the sociological decyphering of how this works reveals a loose practice consisting entirely of compromise and adjustments."[5] On the level of state institutions, the prefect plays the essential role, but on the level of civil society that role is played by the mayor. But this complicity between prefects and mayors, which is a peculiar mode of articulation of the state on society and of society on the state, can function only by by bypassing both the central state rule and local populations. In order to work, the negotiations between the prefects and the local representatives must operate away from the indiscrete scrutiny of the center and of the mass of citizens. The adjustment permitted by the "notables" system compels these two principals to act in the dark, to hide their negotiations from control of the high administration and by citizens. As Grémion again notes, "the complicity of the territorial bureaucracy and the local representatives is based on the withholding of specific information as to the means of adapting or circumventing central rule. Neither the functionary nor the notable has any interest in divulging this, for that would mean the end to such of mutual negotiation. On the contrary, it is to the extent that they succeed in concealing the logic of their interaction from control by the central bureaucracy or the local population that the functionaries and notables preserve the autonomy of a politico-administrative system that guarantees their liberty of reciprocal action."[6]

The obvious advantage of this system has been to permit a flexible modernization of French society by doubly protecting localities from the state and the market. Although this way of protecting local particularisms was especially well adapted to rural France in the relatively unindustrialized and weakly urbanized conditions prevalent at the time when it was instituted, conditions were quite different after WWII. Though the mode of republican territorial government resists — Pompidou used it tactically to serve as a counterweight to the political and social pressures of the new salaried strata created by modernization — it will gradually find itself deprived of a socio-cultural base and will become an institutional vestige of a past epoch. The relatively satisfactory articulation it was able to establish between the state and civil society, or more exactly between the prefects and the local notables after 1945, corresponded better to a "cold" France, preserving its particularisms, protecting the privileges of a traditional bourgeoisie incapable of responding to international competition and playing a modernizing role. The union of the territorial bureaucracy and the local notables had finally given birth to a folkloric France — a preserve for local particularisms in the shadow of the Atlantic order, a France whose future could only be dependent on more developed societies. The republican administration ultimately renewed the

5. P. Grémion, "Quelle décentralisation?" in *Le Debat*, No. 16 (November, 1981) p.5.
6. P. Grémion, *Le pouvoir péiphérique*, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

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conception of a politico-administrative system that was an agency for conserving privileges to the detriment of its function of developing productive forces and social transformations.

The establishment of the institutions of the Fifth Republic must be understood partly as a reaction to this trend. The Gaullist aim was to give back to the state its industrializing and modernizing role. It thus logically had to seek to break the conservative complicity linking the prefects to local notables to rediscover a more feasible link between the state and the territory. But with the failure of the 1969 reform, the only thing left of the institutional heritage of Gaullism was a system characterized by presidential authority.

*The Preponderance of the Executive and its Effects on French Society*

For de Gaulle, the strengthening of the executive (which was necessary for the state to fulfill its role of stimulating and regulating economic life and modernizing society) had to be accompanied by a reform of the relations between the state and local collectives. The reason why regionalization was implemented by the Fifth Plan (1964-68) was to make the regions into centers of industrial and urban development, replacing the local notables of the Fourth Republic — conservative, immobilist and moreover, mostly of center-left orientation — with new modernizing elites. But this reform, which had merely partial success, actually accentuated the crisis of the republican local administration without really replacing it by a new model of territorial administration.

The abolition of the "notables," the socio-cultural consequences of industrial and urban development, the new role of the executive, and the extension of industrial and urban development, replacing the local notables of the movements of territorialist opposition which have developed in France since the 1960s. There are two broad kinds of conflictual reaction to the new modes of "articulation" between the state and the territory established by the Fifth Republic: 1) a defensive reaction by the old economic, social and institutional actors, who felt threatened by the fall of the republican local administration (their aim is essentially restorative); and 2) a democratic and modernizing offensive reaction, carried by the new salaried strata which emerged from industrial and urban development (new social strata will play a driving role in the creation and management of associations whose proliferation will enrich France's institutional landscape, and they will take municipal power, carried by an original associative vector, the Groups of Municipal Action, e.g., the Dubedout case in Grenoble).

In reaction to the rationalizing action of the state and of the market, the defensive territorial struggles have sought to preserve narrow interests, local socio-political equilibriums, and threatened cultural identities. These struggles integrated some Poujad-localist and some populist reactions: on the one hand, a defense of local privileges, and on the other an "integralist" offensive — a struggle in the name of traditional values and existing cultural iden-

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tities. These struggles reveal a corporatist explosion in the space left vacant by the crisis of the republican model of political and cultural integration.

The offensive struggles against economico-administrative interventions sought to reconquer territorial action on the level of industrial and urban transformations and to open fields of decision to inhabitants, users, and producers. They contested the state-intervention type of legitimacy in the name of the autonomy of civil society and were expressed in various democratic and modernist currents which, depending on circumstances, joined forces to expel from the municipalities the old notables of the republican administration, who were judged to be both incompetent and anti-democratic; and once they achieved local power they divided into a management and developmentalist wing, and a council wing. These struggles thus sought to promote a new mode of more democratic and more modernizing local management, and keenly raised the question of *social rights* specific to civil society, capable of expressing its diversities, its singularities, and — more offensively — capable of guaranteeing its autonomy in its modes of socialization and transformation. The political "normalization" of these currents, which gradually rejoined the Socialist Party, explains their disappearance from the social scene. Once again, an original expression of society was reabsorbed by political parties.

But the institutions established by the Fifth Republic did not have, as their sole effect, the arousal of various types of territorialist struggle. The preponderance of the executive in a society already marked by excessive centralization, the inability to create a new mode of relations between the state and the local collectives also led to a process of civic disengagement, of dissociation between the politico-administrative institutions and the social arena. Because of this dissociation, French society's work on itself can be done only with great difficulty, either in the direction of the state toward the social (institutional hyperactivism confronting the lack of social initiative), or in the direction of the social toward the institutional (social movements finding no institutional vehicle to express their claims).

The politico-administrative system is up in the air. It manages the field of great industrial and diplomatic strategy but no longer meshes with the members of civil society, or does so only very badly. Similarly, society withdraws and turns back to its everyday life and its categorial interests. The distance between society and the politico-institutional system is becoming greater.

The Socialists were astonished, the day after May 10, 1981, to encounter this social passivity and the multiplication of categorial and corporatist social conflicts. The great social movement which the Socialists expected to support their reforms failed to materialize, and this led one of the leaders of CERES to say, with Bismarckian lucidity, that the political movement reached France ahead of the social movement. Indeed this discovery convinced, albeit more pragmatically than ideologically, certain members of the new government of the need to undertake a reform of relations between the state and society in order to restore the citizens' confidence in their institutions. The objective of decentralization is to give back to the state its social and territorial bases, and

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to enable it to redeploy its political and cultural integrative capacities so as to use the resulting social mobilization to accelerate the necessary changes in French society.

*The Socialist Government's Decentralization Project*

A lot of conviction, courage and pragmatism would have been necessary to implement a reform which attacks the very foundation of French political culture and its politico-administrative heritage. It runs counter to the state's needs which have been amplified by the economic crisis, and does not hesitate to oppose the centralizing consensus of Left and Right political elites. The liberal minority currents of the Socialist Party are not lacking conviction, but the decentralizing process owes a lot to Defferre, the Minister of the Interior. Rather than posing the fundamental questions able to foster a public debate on the theme of decentralization — a debate which would inevitably have ended in a public outcry both in parliament and in public opinion — Defferre, with the law of March 2, 1982 which raises the question of the prefect's executive function and of governmental tutelage, used a tactic well adapted to the multiple, complicitous resistances of the social body and the body politic.

By detaching local management from the umbrella of administrative tutelage, and thus increasing the responsibilities of elected officials (but subjecting them to an *a posteriori* review which could take them before the courts), this first series of decentralizing measures created a demand among local elected officials that their responsibilities be clarified and they be given new financial, technical and human means to match the scope of their new authority. The machine was thus given a forward thrust, leading to a chain reaction of fifteen laws: mainly, the law on the resources of local collectives, the law on the status of elected officials, the law on the personnel of local collectives and, to round off the whole thing and establish a modern local democracy, a law on the participation of citizens in local life and the management of decentralized collectives.

This tactic adopted by the ministry of the interior explains in part the absence of debate on this reform, though it will deeply change France's social, institutional and cultural landscape. One could have expected that at the time of municipal elections, to certain problems raised by decentralization would be posed and discussed. This was not done. Though the debates had a strong politico-ideological valency on the Left and Right, they are equally characterized by their total silence on the question of local management. Here we touch on the enormous divergence between those who spur political debates, the party militants and the media, and those who run the country. Though the militants have become masters in the rhetoric of ideological debate, they rely on elected candidates regarding questions dealing with the running of everyday life. This distance between elected officials and political militants explains why questions raised by decentralization do not find the necessary channels to reach public opinion. It must likewise be added that certain currents of the Socialist Party, faced with the new municipal context resulting

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from the last elections, show a will to stop the reform, stressing, with purely political logic that it is becoming more and more paradoxical, that the Socialists who have power at the center are redistributing it to the periphery. The absence of debate in the media underscores not only the disinterest of the French in this reform, it also shows their giddiness and fear of learning the civic responsibilities which decentralization will entail. The silence of the associative currents supporting the projects of local democracy prior to the May 10 victory still remains to be explained. French society thus seems not to want to believe in its decentralization just at the moment when it is irreversibly engaged in it.

A law passed in 1972 had given birth to the *Region* under the form of a simple public establishment, a second-level administrative institution federating some departments and having only a weak budget set by the state and subject to the tutelage of the prefect of the region. But if this region, without electoral legitimacy, was maintained, it was being asked "in high places," as deputy Chandermagor would say in 1977, "what could be done with it that would not endanger the state's omnipotence." The fear was thus strong in the currents of the Caesarian Right and the statist Left that universal suffrage might turn the regional assemblies into "small-scale parliaments"; a fear well expressed by Jacques Chirac in 1975: "It is not a question of admitting the election of I-know-not-what regional parliaments or executives which would be a dramatic element confronting and challenging national unity."

Thus, it was necessary to wait for the March 2, 1982 law "on the rights and liberties of the communes, *départements*, and regions" for the region legally to claim to have become a fully empowered local collective by the same title as the *département* or the commune, endowed with institutions having the legitimacy conveyed by universal suffrage: the regional assemblies. The executive power which had previously belonged to the prefects was transferred to the presidents of the assemblies. The suppression of governmental tutelage, of *a priori* controls, to the advantage of *a posteriori* controls is also an innovation introduced by this law. The prefects, converted into "Commissioners of the Republic," by the transfer of executive power to the presidents of elected regional assemblies and the abolition of administrative tutelage thus see their grip on civil society crumbling. They no longer will be able, as in the "notable" system, to capitalize on their "dual capacity," but will be clearly representatives of the state endowed with power enforced mainly on all the state's external administrative services.

It would obviously be risky to sketch in advance the new face of France which will emerge from the effects of the decentralizing laws yet to come. But, from this description of the new institutional framework already put in place by the March 2, 1982 law, one can abstract the general stakes of the reform.

Decentralization does not just tend to open spheres of liberty (theme of the new citizenship) against the bad levelling effects of centralization: the resignation of citizens, a corporatist explosion of society. More precisely, its demo-

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cratic aims are articulated with developmentalist objectives. By breaking the administrative state's bureaucratic grip on French society, the reform should free the capacities for modernizing, transforming actions on the level of different territorial collectivities and thus entrust "change" to the various members of French society.

On the economic level, the struggle for decentralization is complementary to the developmentalist struggle carried on by Mitterrand and Chevènment, in order to make industrialization and the development of new technologies the instruments of France's power and, on the regional level, to make a dense network of small and medium-sized enterprises into the tool for recapturing the internal market and creating productive jobs. The new economic authority of the region thus empowers it for an economic intervention that is better adapted in two directions: giving appropriate assistance to sectors in difficulty in order to defend jobs on the local level; and initiating, together with the economic, unionized and associative actors, an economic development in conformity with the specific local contexts.

On the level of social protection measures, decentralization will make possible a modulated reversal toward civil society of the solidarity mechanisms previously assured essentially by the state. The complementary systems of solidarity established will be more flexible instruments, better adapted to local situations (permitting notably better prevention in the health and social field) and less expensive because of their appeal to associations relying broadly on voluntary assistance. It is not necessary to stress the importance of this other modality of the organization of national solidarity in a society where the cost of social protetion has reached a critical threshold.

On the social level, the stakes of decentralization is to provoke a genuine transformation of mentalities, an apprenticeship process in civic responsibilities, by giving the citizens access to decision-making centers. By allowing the economic and social actors to manage, by assuming the advantages, but also the risks, of their own industrial and urban development, decentralization will give the orientation provided by the state a much broader and more dynamic basis than centralization which produces receivers of assistance and creditors towards a supposedly inexhaustible central treasury. Decentralization seeks to create new spaces of liberty and citizenship intended to remedy the perverse effects of prior standardization, but it also seems to be a more effective route to social mobilization and transformation.

On the whole, decentralization will enable France to forge for itself a new politico-administrative instrument of socio-cultural integration and to modernize local democracy for the benefit of responsible citizens. It will also be a factor in the efficiency of state actions and a means of eliciting responses adapted to the crisis which French society, like all developed societies, is undergoing. But because it shatters the foundations of French political culture and institutional practice, and attacks the categorial prerogatives of the state functionaries of the central administration, decentralization cannot help

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arousing resistance: the passive resistance of certain ministries which are content with the prior logic of administrative functioning, and a more active resistance of ministries like that of Urbanism and Housing where a veritable anti-decentralizing collusion was formed between the cabinet, the engineering corps of Bridges and Roadways, and officials of the C.G.T. Thus, the centralization has not run its course.

But if this reform arouses resistance from those who cling to the past, it also entails risks which its supporters do not underestimate: i.e., the risks of the overlapping of competencies between the new decentralized administrations and the old ones, of bureaucratic sluggishness resulting from the combinations of four new administrative levels (the state, the region, the *département*, and the commune) and of friction between the central administrations and the new local power. All these factors could lead to administrative incoherence and inefficiency in the new system. These various risks explain the strengthening of the prefects' powers, foreseen in the March 2 law assigning them the task of coordinating the various administrative services and being the state's sole spokesmen on the decentralized level with respect to local elected officials. Indeed, this function of authority and pre-arbitration between the administrations still has to be assumed by the prefects. Formerly, the logic of the vertical functioning of the ministries had opposed the formation of such a function.

Decentralization can also strengthen the grip of political parties on the localities — parties which traditionally made the municipalities their greatest strongholds. This would end in the formation of bastions against the central state (of the Right in the context of a Leftist government and of the Left when the government is Rightist). Another risk, and not the least, as elected officials reappropriate local power, is the creation of a new mass of "small bosses," of new local potentates. We would thus see the rise of multiple local powers, the locking-in of centralisms and not the establishment of local democracy. This real risk, in a society where the centralized model is strongly internalized in the spirit of citizens and elected officials, explains the repulsive image which decentralization has acquired. For the Socialists who are working to implement this reform this last trend is the most likely one in the short run, but in the medium and long run they are counting on the success of the appeal to restore civil society implied by decentralization.

In a country where the cause of equality has been acquired once and for all, one of the aims of decentralization is to soften the bad effects that result "from this kind of compromise between administrative despotism and the sovereignty of the people" which produces subjects and executives but not active citizens. As Tocqueville wrote in *Democracy in America*: "It is not the function of laws to revive dying beliefs; but it is the function of laws to interest men in their country's destiny." For French society that is the most fundamental aim of the decentralizing laws.

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# NATIONALIZATIONS: A LEFT-WING ECONOMIC POLICY?*

## by Thierry Paquot

The debate is closed: the nationalizable firms are now state property. The National Assembly and the Senate were the scenes of stormy contention and impassioned debate. Ministers of the previous government did not hesitate to predict the bankruptcy of society brought on by Marxism in power. They pleaded with the public and warned that Marxism had launched a frontal attack on liberalism. It was time to close ranks: the hour was grave, chaos was imminent. We were venturing into the unknown, etc. The debate is closed. In truth, it really involved only the political class. It was a state affair, without popular mobilization, public or democratic debate, or manifest interest at the grass roots.

The debate is closed, but it never really took place. Sure, the polls taken in the last ten years reported (to anyone who cared to listen) that over half the electorate favored the nationalization of banks and a number of large French companies. What these polls really showed was the anxiety of the people questioned: faced with the recession, they invoked the need to carry out a firm economic policy, within which nationalizations play a decisive role. The extension of the public sector is viewed, on the one hand, as an opportunity for creating new jobs and guaranteeing existing ones; on the other, to favor a qualitative improvement in working conditions — even if some of those polled fear a growing bureaucratization.

The concept of nationalization — or, at any rate, the image that people have of it — has not matured over the past ten years. It has not become privileged ideological currency. It is not brandished as a banner. It is by no means a decisive, distinctive political symbol. It remains the property of the majority of trade union and political leaders of the Left and far Left.

Although nationalization has not become a myth carried by the working class, the same cannot be said for *autogestion*. The latter has entered popular parlance, so much so that ideologues, from the far Left to the far Right, have been quick to invoke it in their desire to appear sensitive to popular concerns. Edmond Maire, leader of the *Confédération Democratique du Travail*, (CFDT), after reiterating his view that the establishment of a "self-managed" society is incompatible with capitalism, has argued that "what is at stake, beyond the question of private property, is power."[1]

It is the property/power couple that has mobilized all reform and revolu-

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2. Edmond Maire, *Demain l'autogestion* (Paris: Seghers, 1076), p. 87.

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tionary energies for more than a century. So, property is to be generalized in order to dissolve power: the exercise of power is to be separated from the right to property; property is to be suppressed by rendering it public and delegating power to elected, accountable representatives, etc. How many such combinations have been put forth in the name of how many illusions? The history of the property/power couple corresponds to the tumultuous history of innumerable proposals, projects and manifestos put forth in the aim of "changing our lives."

Those who, discontent with the existing order, have posed the question "what is to be done?" inexorably come back to the question of property and thus to that of the power that it confers. Recently, for example, Blain Busnel, a Socialist Party (PS) national secretary, stated categorically: "Property is power. As long as the companies in question remain in private hands, the national collectivity will not have the tools needed to implement its program for economic recovery. We must go ahead with [nationalizations], for this is the essential preamble to any experiment in economic democracy. If workers are to take on managerial responsibilities, enjoy new rights, and finally become citizens at the factory or office, if shop and office councils are to be established, then we must first bring these companies into the public sphere."[2] This does not address the question of power. How is the firm to be made public, how it it to be socialized? Who will exercise power within the firm: the state, the unions, the consumers, the workers organized in shop councils? Certainly there is no single model, but one cannot proceed towards nationalization without some model in mind.

Is the nub of the problem located in the property/power couple? Can one attempt to transform society without bringing into question the underlying *laws* of society? Finally, in the light of a critical reading of past experience, should nationalization not be viewed as a stabilizing measure, taken in times of severe economic upheaval and crisis in social consensus? Should we not now be fighting for disappropriation rather than appropriation under state control? Is there lurking behind the property/power couple an entire *juridical tradition* that weighs heavily upon the imagination of *apparatchniks*?

How is power to be defined? To do so merely in relation to the possesion of property is to confine ourselves within a narrow Marxist conception. Should we not add a psychological dimension to the socio-economic, political tandem? Power cannot be assessed by the economic weight of a firm in the market — more precisely, it cannot be measured *solely* in quantitative terms. It is *overtly* incorporated within the hierarchy of tasks and the technical division of labor that exist within each firm. And it is even more *insidiously* and imperceptibly tied up in the (more or less conscious) relations the individual (more or less neurotically) maintains with his work, his colleague, his bosses, etc.

Are we faced with only the alternative: "either nationalization of an industrial group is only a step toward integral collectivism, or else it gives rise to an

2. *Le Matin* (July 15, 1981).

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enduring and apparently paradoxical situation in which the state works side by side with capitalists: the nationalized form existing in an economic milieu whose structure is founded upon the law of individual profit?"[3] Is this the right question put in the right terms? In order to clarify the issue, a brief survey of the French public sector will be helpful.

*The Scope of Nationalizations*

The nationalized sector currently represents 35% of total business investments, 95% of bank holdings, 70% of research and development spending, 87% of steel production, 80% of chemical production, 100% of arms manufacture, and 100% of electronics. The new nationalizations involve the rest of the banking sector (excepting foreign banks, cooperative banks and mutual-aid funds), two finance companies (Suez and Paris-Bas), five industrial companies (CGE, PUK, Thomson-Brandt, Saint-Gobain and Rhône-Poulenc), and controlling interest in six major firms.

With the new nationalizations, the public sector doubles in size to represent approximately 25% of total business activity. The state becomes the *employer* of one industrial worker in five (as compared to the previous one in twelve). If we add to this the banks, insurance companies, transport, energy, advertising, etc., the public industrial and commercial sector employs 2,600,000 people (up from 1,700,000): 18% of the total workforce in industry and commerce. If we then add in the civil sevice, local administration and social services, we arrive at a figure of 6 million employees, close to 1 in 3. Compare these figures with the extent of the state-controlled sector for the EEC (9 countries) as a whole in 1974: 7 million employees, 11% of total production, and 22% of total investment.

The following points can be made about the public sector as a whole: 1) The French public sector is *anomalous.* What does a mixed company such as the SNCF [the state railroads], which employs over 270,000 people, have in common with the *aéroport de Paris,* which employs 5,000? What similarity is there between a state-controlled enterprise (the PTT [post and telecommunications]), a municipal-controlled enterprise (the RATP [*Parisian transport*]), a public establishment (EDF [the electric power utility]), and an incorporated company (Renault)? There are differences in legal status, dimensions, type of activities, etc. Such diversity stems from the *absence of an economic policy of nationalizations.* Each is the fruit of a particular historical situation. 2) This "patchwork" of companies make up the public sector, which is currently transversed by three trends which will alter its physionomy in the short term: a) The privitization of an ever increasing number of services (use of outside cleaning services in public firms, the resort to temporary workers, etc.), which entails a *de facto* denationalization; b) The deregulation of prices and sub-contracting out that are becoming ever more common in the public sector and which put into question notions of *public service* or the *national interest* (as one manager put it when interviewed: "Those who give orders implement

3. Bernard Chenot, *Les Entreprises nationalisèes* (Paris: PUF, 1977), p. 11.

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social policy at the expense of sub-contracted workers");[4] c) The impact of the internationalization of labor and capital on the modes of management, radically transforming: the concepts of tripartite or bipartite management; the modalities of return on invested capital (given the possibility of geographic transfer of surplus); the technical division of labor with the firm (given the possibility of spatial separation). 3) The claim that the public sector stifles competiton is a sweeping generalization without foundation. The SNCF after all has not put either trucking or shipping out of business. We should be careful to distinguish within the public sector between well-nigh perfect monopolies and large firms which, by their very size, alter the pseudo-ideal laws of perfect competition. What is indisputable, however — much to the despair of ultra-liberal anti-statists — is that the state, by means of the public sector, can (and does) influence production, investment, industrial sectors, localities, etc. in short, industrial policy.

Generally, the reaction to such objections is the invocation of *planning*. Planning, being centralized, thus serves to harmonize the strategies of the different firms and fuse them in a concerted, nation-wide action. In the historical evolution of French socialist ideology, planning has been the counterpart of nationalization ever since 1919. When the CGT (*Confédération Générale du Travail*) called for the nationalization of key sectors, this was to be carried out only conjointly with the setting up of a Economic Works Council (*Conseil Economique du Travail*) that was to coordinate the diverse demands of the different "social partners." Correspondingly, in 1934 the plan drawn up by the CGT advocated the nationalization of credit and the largest companies. The overall rationale, the guarantee of the success of the operation, is always assured by the plan: whether an emergency plan, an anti-crisis plan, etc. Thus in the aftermath of the Second World War, a plan for reconstruction and capital investment went hand in hand with the wave of nationalizations.

As time passed, however, the progressive withering away of the plan acted as a brake on the activities of the public sector. The recent two-year interim plan thus depends on nationalizations to explore "new ways toward recovery and progress." Nevertheless, the absence of any real governmental project and hence of any real or coherent economic policy constitutes the most serious short-coming of current administration.

*New challenges* confronting legislators, politicians, and militants in general, on both the theoretical and practical fronts, are: 1) the *multinationalization* of nationalized firms or nationalizable firms; 2) the *goal of industrial policy* and consequently the definition of needs, priorities, and choices; 3) the *decentralization* and *regionalization* of administration of public sector enterprises. Should we, as Third-Worldist militants insist, call for the nationalization by

4. *Pratiques et signification de la sous-traitance dans l'industrie automobile en France,* cited by A. Azouvi, "Nationalizations et principles de gestion," *Revue critique de l'economie politique*, No. 2 (1978), p. 34. Azouvi writes with respect to Renault affiliates; "In 1945, [Renault] had eight affiliates. Twenty years later, there were 200 counting all subsidiaries...The [establishment of] an affiliate meant that the wage levels and fringe benefits given to workers in the parent company could be circumvented." In the examples cited by Azouvi, the wage differentials ranged from 6% to 20%.

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host countries of branches or subsidiaries of French firms operating abroad? Or should we, on the contrary, follow Maurice Duverger in hoping that nationalization creates "powerful firms able to take on equally the giants of capitalism on a market progressively being unified on a world scale?"[5]

The political answer to such questions depends ultimately on the answer to yet another question: what orientation should the French productive apparatus be given? If we want to modernize it and render it profitable, then the way is clear: integrate still further into the international division of labor, given priority to exports, cut out sectors in decline, liquidate lame ducks, concentrate resources in high tech sectors, and so emerge at the head of the advanced countries. Or are we prepared, on the contrary, to undertake a wholesale conversion aimed at reducing the exploitation of the poorer nations, leading to a re-equilibriation of international trade, a counterbalance to the imperialist practices of the other powers, *a redefinition of production for a new mode of consumption*? This response imposes radical politics which would *inherently* challenge the productivist policies of the ruling parties, as well as the entrenched consumption patterns of the working class, breaking with *industrial logic*, whether that based on the generation of profits for a handful of monopolists or on the satisfaction of needs and pseudo-needs defined from above.

*Social Forces and Nationalization*

The Right, with no great originiality, is against nationalization. Chirac, Gaullist leader and mayor of Paris, has vowed to denationalize when the Right regains power. He forgets that De Gaulle himself was a partisan of nationalization and that the principle of transferring monopoly property to the state is enshrined in both the Fourth and Fifth Republic constitutions.

The unions welcomed the new nationalizations with varying degrees of enthusiasm. The CGT is very pleased with the October 1981 legislation and wants only to democratize the management of the nationalized firms. Its reaction can be explained by the numerical strength that it has in the public sector and hence the weight that it will have in the *counseils d'administration* and *counseils d'entreprise*. The CFDT, for its part, has always opposed tripartite management and has adopted an attitude of cautious reserve toward this major political change. The CFDT fears a drift toward *étatisation* and fells it high time to launch a counter-attack in the direction of *autogestion*. *Force Ouvrière*, always respectful of the law, accepts the new situation while reaffirming its guiding principle that unions are to defend workers' interests and not assume or participate in management. As for the CGC, it hopes that management and the supervisory staff will not be impeded in their functions by any parallel bipartite organs. Further, it fears being overwhelmed by the increased power of working-class unions. Finally, the CFTC while it does not favor public ownership, reiterates its support for any policy of participation.

5. Maurice Duverger, "Le socialisme du troisième type," *Le Monde* (July 19-20, 1981).

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The PS succeeded in convincing the PCF to accept the principle of nationalization of the major industrial groups and the banking sector. The Communists have had a love-hate relationship with nationalizations; after years of rejecting nationlization, the PCF incorporated it into its program and now claim to be its defender. Writing in the party press, Philippe Herzog, along with other leading PCF economists, claims that "the public sector...is an essential means to halt the rise of inflation, create jobs, revitalize machine-tools, steel, textiles and other industrial sectors, and redeploy, making bold use of science and technology, our national and regional assets."[6] The Nationalization Fairy is even more extraordinary than Santa Claus! For socialist leaders, the extension of the public sector is evidence of the government's firm resolve to resuscitate the economic machinery and put in place a new industrial policy. However, this "new industrial policy" remains undefined.

*The Firm and Its Reach*

The firm and the entrepreneur are universally considered as the fundamental forces of a market economy. In micro-economics textbooks, the firm is defined as the bringing together to a common location of a group of individuals who produce goods and services for the purpose of selling these products on the market. Such a firm is evidently an *abstraction*. Capitalism weaves constraining and contradictory bonds between the different "agents" and "actors," between the state, banks, trade unions, consumers, suppliers, households, etc. What would the Peugeot firm at Sochaux be without the 3000 sub-contracted workers who live on the outskirts of this company town? Conversely, how should we classify the firm of five employees that sells 80% of its prodution to the auto manufacturer? The firm cannot thus be defined strictly by what lies within its gates; it exerts tenacious control beyond its physical boundaries and outside of working hours. The firm is an organization with its own rules of operation. Does nationalization fundmentally alter the nature of the firm? Is the firm so *disorganized* by nationalization that the work carried out is no longer alienating?

The large and small firm, the multinational and the cooperative, all have a common logic which tends to subordinate individuals to or incorporate them within the organization.[7]

*ublic Enterprise as a Business* The public enterprise has long been characterized n term sof its specific goal: serving the general interest. But what is meant by he "general interest?" Here the mystery lies. According to some theoreticians of cooperation (Gide, Lavergne, or Lasserre), the general interest is maximum collective advantage. In economic language, this means that there is a maximization of consumer rent or minimization of marginal utility for each type of production. with respect to the production *in toto*, this means a distribution of productive forces in such a way that, for consumers, the marginal

6. "Les nationalisations au présent," *Economie et politique* (September 1981), p. 32.
7. Max Pagès *et al, L'Emprise de l'organisation* (Paris: PUF, 1979), p. 72.

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utilities of the different goods consumed are equal. Generally, the public enterprise is managed so as to make it competitive with national or multinational private firms. *Efficiency*, not the rapid accumulation of capital, is the goal of public enterprises.

But economic specialists today agree that profit is not the only or principal motor of the private firm, which means that the distinction between public and private enterprise is less than apparent. Furthermore, the laws of May 11 and December 18, 1953 eliminated the principle of tripartism (by excluding representation of users) for public enterprises, gave governmental authorities the right to appoint the president of the administrative council, and strengthened means to enforce decisions. Thus the "general interest" constitutes a satisfactory formula only because it allows all parties to impart their own interpretation. Similarly, many questions remain unanswered. What role does the public enterprise play in the general effort to adapt resources to needs? How are prices determined? How does the public enterprise contribute to a redistribution of income? What is its innovative dynamic and what is its role with respect to research and development? Impressions and hesitations are not satisfactory responses to these *essential* questions.

The public enterprise is said to operate within the logic of the private sector in that it is a business and thus must balance its books. On the other hand, it is said to operate within the logic of the plan in that its economic policy accords with plan directives and its social policy is sufficiently daring to allow the government to hold it up as a showpiece for industrial relations.

*Are The Two Great Principles of Nationalization Outdated?* Partisans of nationalization invoke two great principles: the struggle against monopolies and the control of key sectors of the economy. Nationalization cannot encompass the entire national economy. Monopolies are the first target for nationalization for two reasons. First, they are the very manifestation of the concentration of capital and represent a form of socialization that just needs to be brought under collective control. Second, the economic weight of monopolies is such that controlling them imparts considerable influence over an entire sector of the economy. However, it needs to be asked whether nationalization is really the best solution when public retention of a certain percentage of shares would ensure effective control over firm policy.

Moreover, nationalization of key industries is a rather imprecise formula. What exactly is a key industry? A given economy is made up of a whole vertical array of activities — from production of raw materials to finished goods. At what stage of production is control most useful for a socialist economy undergoing transformation? Certain raw materials, such as oil, are products which enter into the fabrication of consumer goods; in this case, is it not more practical to nationalize the extractive industries rather than the refining industries? There is no key industry that will always have critical importance. *Key industries vary with the transformation of the national productive apparatus* under pressures from a changing international division of labor, technical progress,

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and social demands. On the other hand, *credit* and *transportation* are critical "services" over the long term, and nationalization of these indiscutably creates a balance of forces favorable to the state.

*The Nationalization of the Chiefs.*. Rathenau called what he saw as the ineluctable trend toward increasing firm autonomy "*das Unternehmen an sich*," the firm as an end in itself. Whether it be the entrepreneur described by Sombart or the Buddenbrook founder described Thomas Mann, the head of a firm is increasingly subject to the logic of the firm itself. Henri de Man and L. Lauret in the 1930s (well before Burnham and John Kenneth Galbraith) pointed to the ascension to the top of major capitalist firms (i.e., those potentially nationalizable) of a new elite bringing with them a new managerial style. Lucien Lauret even foresaw the day when upper-level executives would be schooled in union ranks and would replace the *managerial elite*. Is such a picture really adequate today? Power no longer stems simply from the system of hierarchy but rather pervades the whole organization; it can be defined as "the capacity of the organization to subject individuals to the abstract logic of profit and expansion.[8] Power does not originate from ownership, and diluting the latter hence does not necessarily alter the former. Power is exercised through operating procedures. Power and authority are not solely determined by possession of capital nor by position within the relations of production (or on the organizational chart). Power exists, is manifested, and reproduces itself in ways relatively independent of material conditions. Vulger Marxists still have much to learn in this regard. In a rather subversive book, Mothe observes that an ideology can have real impact on people only if the system being proposed already functions. If we examine the issue of nationalizations in this light, we can see why so little enthusiasm is in evidence among the workers. The public enterprise *appears* to be (rightly so because it *is* in fact) a private business, in which the technical, social and sexual division of labor function as always.

Instead of nationalizations from above, then, woudl it not be preferable to promote experimentation, knowing that "in experimentation what is valuable is the process of change and learning that it brings to the actors?"[9] Furthermore, it remains to be seen whether the powers that be see in the nationalization program a movement for social emancipation. If so, they should encourage efforts at workers' self-organization. If not, do they see nationalizations only as a means to respond to the crisis and satisfy a moral imperative?

*...Or the Chiefs for Nationalization?* The government has apponted the directors of the newly nationalized firms. The majority of these are technocrats whose political leanings can hardly be termed socialist; the main criteria for selection has been their competence and seriousness of purpose. Mitterrand, at the time of appointing the general administrators of the nationalized enterprises

8. *Ibid*, p. 72.
9. Daniel Mothé, *L'Autogestion au goutte a goutte* (Paris: Le Centurion, 1980), p. 173.

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(February 17, 1982), provided guidelines for the "total" autonomy of decision-making and activity of these sectors: "I expect that the industrial enterprises will contribute to realizing our objectives for redressing our economy in matters of employment, investment, research, and the international influence of France." The newly appointed President of Thomson, Alain Gomez, gave his response to such good intentions in June 1982: "My job, as I see it, is to come up with a surplus. This implies getting orders and giving orders."

*Nationalizations: An Ethical Position?*

"Nationalization" often idnicates the route to follow in the construction of socialism — a route that has nothing in common (on the contrary) with the *route to servitude*. Instead, it is the path of *Liberty* and *Justice* so passionately traced out by a Jaurès. Such a conception dates to the 19th century and is closely related to that of the inevitable *march of Science and Progress*. Inherent in this is a profound faith in the achievement of a generalized well-being for the populace as a whole. Periodically a charismatic leader comes along to give life to such hopes. "The *time for nationalizations* has come," they said at the turn of the century. Has that time passed, now that nationalizations are being implemented? In effect, nationalization is a pragmatic measure on the economic level and a moral measure on the level of socialist politics. Economically, we cannot make a judgment until a certain time has elapsed so that we can draw up a balance sheet of the objectives initially stated and the results achieved. Politically, the measures are more problematic. Opinion polls are stacked and are not reliable; at best they indicate tendencies, a "spirit of the times." Referendums are no better. How an producers and users — two social groups heterogeneous and often overlapping, in essence two abstractions — be made to express themsevles directly? Can one change society with abstractions?

Having read Napoleon or Lenin, the impatient among us would say: "Proceed, then see." Thus first one nationalizes, then one defines an industrial policy, a social policy, a cultural polciy, etc. The skeptics would say: the development and dynamic of the world-system cannot be constrained by national action because the boundaries extend outside the Nation. Nationalization in an era of multinationals cannot break with the udnerlying logic of the world system (as defined by Wallerstein, for example).[10] Even if one has to nationalize, for lack of any alternative vision of economic policy, it is best to do so *quickly*.

But why nationalize? The reasons put forward by socialists are always the same: revive the economy, gravely affected by the international crisis, by means of an investment policy; gamble on a different industrial policy (new siting of firms, a differentiated insertion in the international division of labor, an innovative policy for French nationalized multinationals, etc.); and finally

10. Cf. *L'Expansion* (May 21 - June 3, 1982).

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put into effect a different social policy (in which case nationalized firms would be the terrain of experimentation). These three justifications are consistent with the history of the concept of nationalization. The one difference, imposed by the status of the French productive apparatus, is that the key sectors are no longer the same. Nowhere is there any mention of elaborating a different industrial practice, i.e., a different production with different working conditions and different means. "Travail post," shift work, the technical division of labor, are all these "evils" of industrial society to be perpetuated within the nationalized firm? A business is a business. Such a tautology does have the merit of being explicit, however; it is not only the content (industrial policy) but also the container (the workplace and the organization of different tasks which it combines) that must be *reformed*.[11]

*A Socialist Party Colloquium on Nationalizations*

On December 11-12, 1982 the PS organized a national colloquium on public-sector enterprises, which numerous ministers and deputies attended. One expected clarifications and a description of the ensemble of socialist economic policy. Instead, what came out of the conference was broad general principles once again announced with great determination. Delors, then Minister of the Economy, spoke of the *French path* of nationalizations: a public sector open to the world market and equipped with means to be simultaneously competitive and innovative. However, in order that such a public industrial sector could exist, it was necessary to remold the French industrial issue, to renovate the small and medium-sized firms (PME), and to clarify the latter's relation to the public sector. Auroux, Minister of Labor, after having affirmed that the government "could not fail," admitted that it had to be recognized that "the law cannot replace the will of men" and that he, personally, was so far disappointed with the nationalization program: the nationalized firms had not yet become laboratories for social experiementation. Given these conditions, he said, it was necessary to mobilize workers and revive a "social dialogue."

On the whole, the speakers shared a belief that nationalizations without a plan and a real industrial policy were of no real utility. "The plan *à la française*" had to facilitate a reconquest of the domestic market and stimulate export-oriented firms. It had to reanimate the spirit of enterprise. Industrial policy had to be ambitious and long-term in nature. And so on. Was this a meeting of businessmen? No, but the overall tone was that of *decision-makers,* of *politicians*, of *specialists*. No, but the organization of work, an analysis of the crisis, the political, social and cultural transformations to carry out were strangely absent from the debate. Not to speak of *autogestion*!

11. See for a discussion of these themes: Pierre Rosanvallon, "L'idée de nationalisation dans la culture politique francaise," *Le débat*, No. 22 (January 1981); Jacques Arnol, "Nationalisations: un pas vers l'autogestion?" Critique socialiste, No. 42 (1982). See also the dossier on nationalizations in *Projet*, No. 163 (March 1982), especially the articles by Hughes Portelli, "Socialisme et nationalisations: un vieux débat," and Michel Beaud, "Quelle logique au service de quelle politique?"

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# THE GENERAL'S REVENGE: FRENCH SOCIALISM AND THE FIFTH REPUBLIC

by Mark Kesselman

By gaining election as the Fifth Republic's fourth president in May 1981, François Mitterrand must surely have savored his revenge against Charles de Gaulle, the Fifth Republic's founder and first president. Mitterrand was among de Gaulle's foremost opponents in the early years of the republic and author of a fiery indictment of de Gaulle, *Le Coup de'Etat Permanent.* Mitterand's unrelenting and tenacious opposition to the forces dominating the Fifth Republic culminated in his stunning victory of May 10, 1981, followed six weeks later by the election of an absolute majority of Socialist party deputies to the National Assembly. The electoral triumph decisively swept from office the conservative coalition, including the remnants of Gaullism, which had dominated the Fifth Republic for twenty-three years.[1] Mitterrand lost every battle but one against de Gaulle in the 1960s. (The single exception, however, was not insignificant: after de Gaulle failed to revive his flagging political fortunes by a referendum in April 1969, he immediately retired from the presidency and from political life. However, de Gaulle's former prime minister, Georges Pompidou, promptly won the presidential elections called to replace de Gaulle.) By his 1981 presidential victory, Mitterrand appears to have ultimately won his war against de Gaulle and the Fifth Republic.

And yet, on the basis of two years of Socialist rule, one might question just who was taking revenge on whom? Indeed, according to Oliver Duhamel, author of the principal study of the Left in the Fifth Republic, the Left's accession to power provided the final element lacking to establish the republic's legitimacy and stability: democratic alternation in office.[2] For this to occur, beyond a leftist electoral victory it was essential that the Left win by loyal competition, and that it accept the rules of the Fifth Republic electoral game as well as the entire constitutional edifice of the republic, that the previous incumbents accept the Left's victory, and that a peaceful transition occur. Furthermore, the republic's legitimacy could not be assured until the Left exercised power in a way that buttressed institutional continuity and stability.

1. The situation is more complex, for Jacques Chirac, nominal inheritor of the Gaullist mantle, indirectly helped elect Mitterrand in 1981. Chirac, former prime minister of President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, ran against Giscard in 1981. Chirac's failure to enthusiastically endorse Giscard at the runoff ballot helped seal the latter's fate. A sizeable proportion of Chirac's first-round supporters abstained or voted Mitterrand in the runoff. For the best analysis, see Jérôme Jaffré, "De Valéry Giscard d'Estaing à François Mitterrand: France de gauche, vote de gauche," *Pouvoirs,* No. 20 (1982), pp. 5-28.

2. Olivier Duhamel, "1981, la Ve achevée. Sur dix caracteristiques du régime," *Pouvoirs*, No. 20 (1982), pp. 127-36. Duhamel traces the gradual reconciliation between the left and the Fifth Republic in *La Gauche et al Ve République* (Paris: PUF, 1980).

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These conditions have all been fulfilled: surveying the functioning of the republic since 1981, the General would doubtless be highly satisfied with his handiwork. Yet, Socialist rule is not a case of *plus ça change*. Important changes have occurred since 1981; even larger ones may lie ahead.

That the Socialist government and the new opposition have adhered to the letter and spirit of the Fifth Republic does not preclude lively political disagreements. But conflicts have concerned specific policies of the government — not its right to rule. One quite minor exception, in April 1982, was precipitated by the Left's setback in local elections and a number of terrorist attacks in France. Influential rightist politicians, including former prime minister Michel Debré, former cabinet minister Alain Peyrefitte, and president of the Gaullist parliamentary caucus Claude Labbé mounted an ugly campaign questioning the Left's legitimacy. Labbé, for example, argued that the Socialists were attempting to sponsor "a legal revolution contrary to the Constitution"; he also called on Mitterrand and Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy to resign on grounds of incompetence. Peyrefitte argued that the *pays légal* and the *pays réel* were drifting further apart, an ominous allusion to Charles Maurras. Yet the Right's sour criticisms backfired. Leftist leaders had little difficulty discrediting critics, for the Left's legitimacy was firmly established. Although the Left suffered another setback in March 1983 municipal elections, the Right refrained from engaging in a repetition of its spring 1982 campaign.

The Right's charges fell flat because the Left has scrupulously respected constitutional processes. For example, its record on civil rights and liberties is far superior to its predecessors. Nor have leftists argued that it should be otherwise,telling evidence of the Left's reconciliation with the Fifth Republic and liberal democracy. Two apparent exceptions to the Left's acceptance of the Fifth Republic confirm the point.

At the Socialist party (PS) "victory congress" in October 1981, Paul Quilès, third-ranking official in the party hierarchy, advocated a purge of the civil service. Quilès provoked a large flap by an infelicitous allusion to Robespierre, when he called for "heads to roll." But Quilès' full remark, rarely mentioned, was that the government should quickly designate the specific administrators to be replaced and dispel the malaise within the upper reaches of the civil service deriving from uncertainty about the government's intentions.

In practice, the Socialist government made relatively few changes in executive personnel. Many sectors were barely affected. Four major areas of turnover, all at the highest reaches of the administration, were administrative directors, regional educational directors, prefects, and directors of state-run telecommunications. Much of this turnover consisted of musical chairs. For example, prefects were shunted from one region to another, often at their own request, to spare them the loss of face involved in being obliged to execute policies in conflict with past ones. Virtually all administrators retained their civil service career rank and financial benefits. There were few cases of sanctions for partisan reasons; and nearly all those "purged" had

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been political appointees who helped create the "Etat Giscard."[3]

A wholesale change occurred in the personal staffs to the president and government (*cabinets* ministers), but this is common practice. Moreover, there has been a high degree of continuity in the social backgrounds of personal advisors. A majority continue to be recruited from those born into families of civil servants, although the proportion has diminished. Within this group, however, those recruited from prestigious *grands corps* have given way to appointees from more modest backgrounds, who failed to rank at the top of the class at elite schools. As Pierre Birnbaum describes the shift in social backgrounds of this important group, those with inherited privilege *(heritiers)* have made way for scholarship students *(boursiers)*.[4]

The second apparent exception to Socialist acceptance of Fifth Republic legality also demonstrates how fully the Left has embraced the republic. When the Constitutional Council, whose members were all appointed by previous conservative political leaders, ruled in January 1982 that the government failed to provide fair compensation for stockholders of firms slated for nationalization, several PS officials impugned the Council's integrity. The ruling seemed unwarranted: even the Conseil d'État and conservative opponents of the government agreed that the terms of compensation were adequate. Moreover, the Council's ruling caused further delay and expense at a critical phase of government economic policy. Nonetheless, the government immediately announced that it would comply with the Council's ruling and Mitterrand publicly admonished the Council's Leftist critics.

Two other pieces of evidence might suggest that the Socialist government has broken with Gaullist practice. One was the appointment of Communist party representatives to the government. Yet, this was not the only occasion when Communists served in a French government. The leader who first appointed Community cabinet ministers was none other that Charles de Gaulle and Communists served throughout de Gaulle's stewardship in 1944-46. Both then and in the current period, Communists were a tiny minority in the government and served in secondary positions. Both times, the reasons for appointing Communist ministers were probably to reward the party for past service (during the Resistance for de Gaulle, the Left victory for Mitterrand) and, more important, to neutralize the party by confining it to a subordinate position within the government when it might have done more harm in the opposition. Finally, both de Gaulle and Mitterrand may have sought to domesticate the Communist party and integrate its supporters within the French political community. Indeed, there have been no more loyal members of the Mitterrand team than the Communist ministers. Unlike many

3. See the three-part series in *Le Monde*, June 29-30, July 1, 1982, "L'Administration dans le changement," and François Bardos, "Les fonctionnaires et le pouvoir politique," *Pouvoirs*, No. 20 (1982), pp. 102-14.

4. See Monique Dagnaud and Dominique Mehl, *L'Elite rose. Qui gouverne?* (Paris: Ramsay, 1982) and the review by Pierre Birnbaum in *Le Monde*, December 29, 1982. Also see Jean-Marie Colombani, "L'entrée en force du militantisme à l'Elysée," *Le Monde*, November 16, 1981, and Samy Cohen, "Les Hommes de l'Elysée," *Pouvoirs*, No. 20 (1982), 87-100.

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Socialist ministers, the Communists do not publicly criticize government policy or squabble with their cabinet colleagues.

*Socialists and the State*

A second body of evidence that might suggest Socialist discontinuity with Gaullist practice is the relation of the Socialist government to state institutions. To begin with, Socialist structural reforms apparently represent a substantial break with past practice. Two key reforms are nationalization of banking and industry and decentralization of the administrative structure. Yet, both represent continuity rather than a break with Gaullism. The nationalization measures of 1982 represent an extension of nationalization reforms sponsored by the Popular Front and de Gaulle's Liberation government. Key industries brought under public control in the earlier periods include the broadcast media, rail and air transportation, energy, Renault (the largest French automobile producer), and most banking. The Socialist government continued what was initiated earlier and for similar reasons: to strengthen state control over the economy, improve the French economy's performance, and increase social equity (probably in that order). While the 1982 nationalization reforms further shift the balance from private toward public control in France, this hardly represents a rupture. France has always been highly statist and *dirigiste*; the state has always played a more intimate and direct role in the economy compared to other advanced capitalist states. Consistent with increasing the state's direct steering capacity, both de Gaulle and Mitterrand have strengthened central state indicative planning.

If there was discontinuity within the Fifth Republic on using the state for economic steering, it occurred not in 1981 but when Giscard appointed neoliberal Raymond Barre as prime minister in 1976. Giscard's and Barre's reliance on the free market and their dismantling of state controls (at least in theory — the matter is more complex in practice) contrasts sharply with de Gaulle's approach.[5]

Decentralization might be interpreted as reflecting a sharper break with the past. The Socialist government has transferred primary responsibility for major political functions, including urban land use and planning, transportation, and regional economic development from the national bureaucracy to elected sub-national governments. The prefectoral *tutelle* (the system of national administrative pre-clearance of local decisions) has been completely abolished. Elected presidents of departmental and regional governments have replaced the prefect as executive of these governments and henceforth are responsible for preparing the agenda of the local legislature's deliberations, executing its decisions, and supervising local administrators. Regional governments have been elevated to full legal status as local governmental bodies, and have obtained increased tax powers, responsibility for regional

5. For analyses of the Barre period, see essays by Berger, Cohen, Lauber, and Zysman, in William G. Andrews and Stanley Hoffmann, eds., *The Fifth Republic at Twenty* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981).

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planning, and a voice in preparing the national plan.[6]

The decentralization reforms represent the most substantial redistribution of power among territorial units of government since the basic charters of local governments were legislated in 1871 and 1884. They also apparently represent a sharp break with de Gaulle's reliance on the centralized state. Yet, the matter is not so simple. In 1964, under de Gaulle's presidency, an important regional reform was sponsored. By 1981, the prefectoral *tutelle* had already been virtually eliminated by previous Fifth Republic governments. Several provisions of the decentralization reforms legislated in 1981-82 had been proposed by the Barre government and were being considered by Parliament when Mitterrand dissolved the National Assembly in 1981. And de Gaulle himself staked his office on a referendum on regional and Senatorial reform in 1969.

Moreover, it remains an open question whether the Socialists will in fact carry through on their promises of decentralization. Texts involving decentralization have a habit in France of being nullified in practice.[7] A key unresolved question is whether the Socialist government will sponsor a substantial transfer of tax resources to refurbished local governments. Two good reasons for skepticism are the economic crisis and the Left's defeat in 1982 and 1983 local elections. Prior to these elections, the Left controlled a majority of local governments; that is no longer the case.

Perhaps even more important than continuity between past and present structural reforms is continuity concerning what has *not* changed. Socialist structural reforms all involve liberal democratic representative processes and have been achieved exclusively by parliamentary means. The government has resolutely opposed any extra-legal methods, e.g., direct action by workers to seize factories. (Interior Minister Gaston Defferre has boasted that the Socialist government acted with greater dispatch than previous governments in ordering police to evacuate workers waging sit-down strikes.) Whereas the Common Program of the Left negotiated between the Communist and Socialist parties in 1972 encouraged workers to propose that their firm be nationalized, the Socialist government emphasized that only those firms explicitly enumerated in Mitterrand's presidential platform would be nationalized. Additional firms will not be added to the list until the Left receives a fresh electoral mandate.

The Socialists' fidelity to liberal democratic processes is demonstrated by

6. For a fuller analysis, see my "The Tranquil Revolution at Clochermerle: Decentralization in France and the Crisis of Advanced Capitalism," forthcoming in a volume edited by Michael Aiken and Terry MacDougall, eds., *Local Institutions in National Development: Strategies and Consequences of Local-National Linkages in the Industrial Democracies.* I discuss other Socialist structural reforms, as well as other aspects of Socialist France, in "Prospects for Democratic Socialism in Advanced Capitalism: Class Struggle and Compromise in Sweden and France," *Politics & Society,* Vol. 11, No. 4 (1982), pp. 397-438; and "Socialism without the Workers: The Case of France," *Kapitalistate* (forthcoming, 1983).

7. See Peter Alexis Gourevitch, *Paris and the Provinces: The Politics of Local Government in France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980) and Douglas E. Ashford, *British Dogmatism and French Pragmatism: Central-Local Policymaking in the Welfare State* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1982).

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the fact that all the structural reforms aim to strengthen representative processes. Take the reorganization of nationalized industries. Public sector industrial workers gain few additional rights beyond what the Socialist-sponsored Auroux reforms of industrial relations confer on private-sector workers. (The Aurox reforms, it should be noted, represented a major change in France's industrial relations legislation. But the effect was merely to strengthen workers' rights to organize and bargain collectively, helping French workers belatedly achieve a level of organizational protection that workers elsewhere achieved generations ago.) Public sector workers henceforth receive release time to assemble several times yearly in shop floor or office councils to discuss working conditions and the organization of shopfloor production. However, the councils have purely consultative power. Public sector workers are also granted release time to participate in local union meetings. These innovations hardly constitute an assault on capitalist hierarchy or a movement toward the self-organization of the working class. They do not increase workers' control, much less represent a step toward *autogestion*.

The decentralization reforms represent a partial shift from relying on bureaucratic decision-making to locally elected representatives. The reforms promise to divest the state of responsibility for regulating the myriad conflicts of local political life. But the "local state" will benefit from the transfer; the reforms promise no greater self-organization of society. However welcome a shift, it merely brings French practice closer to other advanced capitalist nations.[8]

*Refurbishing and Rationalizing the State*

Nationalization and decentralization are often regarded as divergent: decentralization reduces the state's scope, nationalization extends it. The fact that the Socialist government sponsored both is considered evidence of its incoherence. This criticism is inaccurate, for the two reforms are quite complementary. By divesting the state of responsibility for "secondary" matters, it becomes better equipped, in Prime Minister Mauroy's words, "to devote itself to essential tasks."[9] Foremost among such tasks is the attempt to streamline and restructure the economy in a period of economic crisis and intense international economic competition. The Socialist reforms refurbish and rationalize the state in a way that de Gaulle would have applauded. Freed from the endless burdens of local regulation, the state will be better equipped to assume responsibility (via nationalization, planning, and its many other formidable powers) for reorganizing the French economy. The PS criticized Giscard for dismantling the state. This passivity, it was charged, hastened the decline of French industry and enabled multinationals to penetrate French markets. The Socialists stressed the need for vigorous state action to

8. For a parallel analysis, see Danièle Linhart and Pierre Rolle, "Droits du travail ou pouvoir des travailleurs," *Non!*, No. 13 (May-June 1982), pp. 27-32.

9. Fierre Mauroy, "Transfert et répartition des compétences," speech to Congrès National des Elus Socialistes et Républicains, reprinted in Parti Socialiste, Société d'Études et de Documentation Municipale, Document No. 29, Paris, 1982.

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counteract these tendencies. Thus, in the first period in office, the Socialist government remained faithful to the statist tradition that dominates French political culture and was reinforced by de Gaulle.[10]

The General's revenge is glaringly apparent from the fact that, aside from the reforms reviewed above, the government has proposed no other modifications in the institutional structure of the Fifth Republic. By its practice, the Socialists thus signify their support for a highly centralized state internally and a sharp imbalance between state and society. Janice McCormick suggests that the government "listened to all interest groups and at times appeared to support all of their contradictory and competing demands. But after consultation, policy was not formulated or implemented in a more democratic, less centralized way than in the past . . . Although the content had changed, the French policy process remained as centralized and state-directed under Mauroy as under previous regimes."[11]

The basic relation among rules institutions within the state also conforms closely to de Gaulle's blueprint. Mitterrand announced at a press conference in September 1981 that he proposed to restore each institution to its rightful place, which meant a partial eclipse of the president. Yet, note the irony that the regime's bitterest opponent at its birth advocated a return to the initial mythical equilibrium among its institutions![12] Such an approach did not signify an abdication of the president's primacy. When asked his views of the president's constitutional powers, Mitterrand replied, tongue-in-cheek, "The presidency wasn't created with me in mind but I can accommodate myself to it quite well." Indeed, Mitterrand's somewhat glacial and haughty demeanor as president seems inspired by the Fifth Republic's founder.

More significant than Mitterrand's personality, however, is that the Socialist president remains the linchpin of the system. The constitutional powers of the French president dwarf those of any comparable elected chief executive in the world. And Mitterrand has exercised these powers to the full. In a message to Parliament July 8, 1981, Mitterrand stressed that the equilibrium he envisaged should not be interpreted as precluding presidential supremacy. Despite the fact that the National Assembly was also elected in 1981, Mitterrand stated that his campaign platform constituted the legislature's mandate. Nor did anyone on the Left challenge this Gaullist interpretation. Mitterrand continued existing practice by appointing the prime minister and government and claiming his right (nowhere specified in the Constitution) to dismiss the government. In an interview with the BBC September 8, 1981,

10. For a similar position, see Patrick Viveret, "La Gauche piégée dans l'Etate," *Projet*, No. 166 (June 1982), pp. 666-74.

11. Janice McCormick, "Thorns Among the Roses: A Year of the Socialist Experiment in France," *West European Politics*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (January 1983), pp. 51, 61. Note that the present article does not deal with foreign policy, which displays strong continuities in style and substance to Gaullist foreign policy.

12. For excellent studies of the Socialist regime's institutional practice in the first year in power, see the speical issue of *Pouvoirs*, No. 20 (1982), "81: la gauche au pouvoir," and Hugues Portelli, "Les Socialistes et l'exercice du pouvoir," *Project*, No. 168 (September-October 1982), pp. 921-32.

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Mitterrand declared, "I intervene to decide what might be considered the fundamental orientations;" the prime minister regulates "daily problems." Mauroy has meekly accepted Mitterrand's interpretation of this division of labor.

In his first months in office, Mitterrand adhered to de Gaulle's initial practice of making few public appearances and mostly confining his purview to foreign and military policy. (This did not prevent Mitterrand from intervening on a host of issues, for example, cancelling an office building project, exonerating art works from a proposed wealth tax, and overruling Mauroy on arrangements for reducing the work week.) Mitterrand also exercised enormous indirect power since he personally selected all leading officials in the government, executive, and Socialist party. Moreover, Mitterrand was the first genuine party leader to occupy the presidency in the Fifth Republic.

Yet, by the spring 1982, Mitterrand abandoned his self-imposed restrictions, making more frequent public appearances and assuming a greater role in domestic affairs. This was doubtless because domestic problems had burgeoned, especially economic difficulties and (with a wave of terrorist attacks within France) the issue of law and order. Mitterrand began meeting regularly with policy advisers on domestic matters and taking a greater direct role. As a result, he has become as powerful a president as any of his predecessors.

Nor has much parliamentary autonomy been restored. Contrary to the initial promise, the National Assembly remains on a short leash. The government has used the array of constitutional measures to restrict parliamentary activity that it formerly condemned. It has demanded authorization for delegated powers to issue decrees with the force of law *(ordonnances)*, demanded a blocked vote on a legislative text to prevent amendments it opposed, and used a procedure by which a government bill is considered to have received legislative approval in the absence of a censure motion carried by an absolute majority of the National Assembly.[13]

*A Governing Party*

The Socialist government has centralized power even beyond other Fifth Republic governments thanks to the development of what is probably the first genuine majority party in the Fifth Republic. In this respect, however, there has been an important change within ruling institutions and a sharp departure from de Gaulle's own intentions. De Gaulle repeatedly railed against the "regime of parties" (for reasons reminiscent of George Washington — or Jean-Jacques Rousseau). De Gaulle regarded parties as sowing divisions and diverting attention from French *grandeur* to the mundane cares of daily life. De Gaulle prided himself on being above parties.

13. The first restrictive procedure was used by the government in early 1982 to regulate part-time and temporary work, and to specify procedures for reducing the work week; the second, to pass the government's nuclear energy program in the fall 1981 over the objections of many Socialist deputies; and the third, to pass a bill in the fall 1982 granting amnesty to army officers imprisoned for attempting to overthrow the government during the Algerian war. (The government's plan for amnesty was opposed by influential Socialist deputies.)

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By contrast, Mitterrand's victory is integrally linked to the Socialist party, which served as Mitterrand's major instrument for reaching power and provided him with a parliamentary majority. (Of course, there has been reciprocal dependence, in that Mitterrand played a major role in rebuilding the near-moribund Socialist party in the 1970s by refurbishing its appeal, recruiting members of the new middle strata to replace the small town social base liquidated by de Gaulle's forced-march industrialization, and sponsoring a PS alliance with the Communists.)

With the partial exception of the Pompidou years, there had not previously been an organic connection between a ruling party and the government. In the first two years of Socialist rule, fourteen cabinet ministers served on the party's directing committee, and Lionel Jospin, Mitterrand's hand-picked successor as first Secretary, met with Mitterrand several times weekly. Until conflicts developed in the fall 1982, Mitterrand also met regularly with his factional lieutenants in the PS (most of whom he appointed to high office).[14]

Not only did Mitterrand continue to rely on the Socialist party, but the factional in-fighting that developed through a decade of PS struggles persisted and was transposed to the government after 1981. Whereas all four major Socialist party factions are represented there, the Mitterrand faction plays the dominant role. Factional competition continues, and factions still develop their own positions and publish their own journals. When Mitterrand disappointed his factional allies by appointing Pierre Mauroy, leader of another faction, to the most powerful office after the president, this produced strains within the Mitterrand group. Some criticism of Mauroy appear to be motivated by factional considerations. For example, following his decision on April 1982 to shift the cost of family allocations from business to labor, he was denounced by André Laignel, popularly known as the "Joxe terrier" because of Laignel's close association with Pierre Joxe, one of Mitterrand's factional colleagues!

Thus, the Socialist party's fractious habits have continued after 1981. As noted above, several "back bench" revolts by the parliamentary caucus were stemmed only by the government applying restrictive measures in the National Assembly. In the fall 1981, the Socialist party executive bureau delegated a Socialist legislator to reshape a government bill on immigrants to make it conform to the party's earlier positions. Minister of the Interior, Gaston Defferre, a prominent Socialist, was forced to negotiate with the PS executive bureau over the text. (However, Lionel Jospin later tacitly admitted that the party had exceeded its role in this case.)[15]

14. For good descriptions, see Jean-Yves Lhomeau, "Un Attelage qui va parfois à hue et à dia," *Le Monde,* May 6, 1982, and Jean-Marie Colombani and Jean-Yves Lhomeau, "Les 'généraux' du P.S. en quête de réhabilitation," *Le Monde,* November 30, 1982. Also see, for the distribution of power in the PS in the pre-1981 period, Hugues Portelli, *Le Socialisme français tel qu'il est* (Paris: PUF, 1980), and Roland Cayrol, "La Direction du Parti Socialiste," *Revue Française de Science Politique,* Vol. 28, No. 2 (April 1978), 201-19.

15. Reported in Pierre Avril, " 'Chaque institution à sa place . . . ' Le President, le parti et le groupe," *Pouvoirs,* No. 20 (1982), pp. 114-26.

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The Socialist party's role within the regime remains ill-defined. Jospin first suggested that it should be the "guardian of the party's program" *vis à vis* the government. But who was to decide the limits of acceptable compromise? Moreover, this appeared quite negative. Jospin next suggested that the PS should serve as an intermediary between the government and its grass roots supporters, defending government policy and reporting militant opinion to the government. Following the Socialist party's defeat in spring 1982 local elections, Jospin mandated the party to develop proposals for the government on matters of concerns to the party or public opinion, including reduction of the work week, the evolution and role of the public sector, revision of the electoral system for legislative elections, and security in urban areas. Yet, the party has proved a poor instrument for policy initiation in the past and it is unlikely that, with its most experienced leaders serving in elected and administrative position, its performance will improve in the future. Despite endless ideological debates within the party in the 1970s, it has mainly existed to serve the electoral ambitions of its leaders. Once they gained office, it has been unable to forge a new role.[16] Thus, although the development of a dominant party is an innovation in the Fifth Republic, the significance of the change should not be exaggerated.[17] Moreover, the PS remains a quite small, weak organization, along with all other French political parties (including the Communist party, after its massive membership losses of the late 1970s). As Maurice Duverger has pointed out, the Socialist party is a poor intermediary compared to its social democratic cousins in Northern Europe. The PS has one member for 40 Socialist voters and 150 French citizens. By contrast, the Swedish Social Democratic party has one member for three SAP voters and eight Swedish citizens; the comparable proportions for the German Social Democratic party are 1/15 and 1/40 respectively.[18]

*Toward a New Relation between State and Society in France?*

The Socialist exercise of power has closely conformed to the Gaullist design. Socialist rule has relied heavily on the centralized institutions of the state to achieve the party's economic and social goals: promoting new rights for workers, reviving French industry, stabilizing class relations, reducing unemployment, and improving France's international economic standing. In its first months in office, the Socialist government employed classic Keynesian demand management techniques to boost aggregate demand, including deficit spending, job creation in the public sector, and increased transfer payments. Alongside these traditional measures, the government sought to

16. In addition to the references in footnote 14, see Roland Cayrol, "Le Godillot et le commissaire politique. Six contraditions a propos du Parti socialiste," *Projet*, No. 161 (January 1982, pp. 32-41.

17. It should be recalled that de Gaulle was forced to acquiesce in the development of a majority party under Georges Pompidou. As Jean Charlot suggested at the time, the UNR served to routinize (and thereby lay the groundwork to replace) de Gaulle's personal leadership. See Jean Charlot, *The Gaullist Phenomenon: The Gaullist Movement in the Fifth Republic* (New York: Praeger, 1971).

18. Maurice Duverger, "Les Trois visages du socialisme français," III, *Le Monde*, December 23, 1982.

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strengthen the state's organizational capacity via nationalization of banking and industry, a renewed emphasis on planning, and the development of industrial policies to renew the French productive apparatus.

The initial approach served to accentuate statism, despite Socialist rhetoric about seeking to encourage voluntarist self-regulation among private groups throughout the society. However, although the French economy's performance in the first year was less bleak than often portrayed (especially when viewed from a comparative perspective), economic difficulties were sufficiently grave to dictate a new orientation.[19] The turn toward "rigueur" initiated in the spring 1982 potentially implies a new role for the state and a new relation between state and civil society. If this were to occur, economic crisis might lead the Socialist government to confound the general in a way that socialist ideology has not.

The new Socialist approach is heavily inspired by Planning Minister Michel Rocard, former *enfant terrible* when he led the ginger left-socialist PSU in the 1970s. Rocard joined the Socialist party in 1974 and soon distinguished between two political cultures on the left: a statist centralizing tradition (to which, implicitly, he consigned his opponents) and Rocard's own approach, which involved decentralization and *socialisme autogestionnaire*.[20] Rocard relied on this distinction to distance himself from Mitterrand and to question two of the latter's key positions: the utility of nationalization as well as the value of allying with the ultra-statist Communist party.

After Mitterrand outmaneuvered Rocard within the PS for the 1981 presidential nomination and won the election, he appointed Rocard to a prominent but somewhat marginal position as Minister of Planning. At first, Rocard maintained a discreet silence. As the economic crisis deepened, however, he began to challenge the Socialists' Keynesian and statist emphasis. In the two-year Interim Plan prepared under his leadership in the fall 1981, instructions guiding preparation of the Ninth Plan (*Le Monde*, September 10, 1982), and a two-part article in *Le Monde* (July 14-15, 1982), Rocard advocated a reduced role for the state and a changed balance between state and society.

According to Rocard, the French Left has traditionally focused on the issue of redistributing the social surplus and has neglected the prior and more fundamental issue of producing a surplus. Given the crisis, this is no longer possible. First, there is a need to shift resources from consumption to investment to enable France to compete internationally and lay the basis for future growth. Second, the Left must encourage a shift in patterns of French political culture to accord higher value to individual initiative and industrial production. Third, the Socialists must not expect the state to resolve the problem of production for the state is ill-qualified for this task. The bureaucratic mentality is inclined toward maximizing equitable access to public services; the

19. A good analysis of the government's economic policy appears in the special issue of *Business Week*, January 16, 1983.

20. Rocard supporters Pierre Rosanvallon and Patrick Viveret spell out this approach more fully in *Pour une nouvelle culture politique* (Paris: Seuil, 1977).

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qualities needed to produce, however, are "imagination, rapidity of execution, and a sense of risk. This is neither the role nor the vocation of the state."[21] In a provocation to his statist associates, Rocard later warned that "France needs firmness and will-power to resist hyperbole and rash calls for state intervention." (*Le Monde*, September 10, 1982.)

Although Rocard was politically isolated and his approach initially rejected (for example, he was ordered to revise his preliminary guidelines for the Ninth Plan), the rest of the government came to share his orientation. This was symbolized by the government's abrupt shift toward restrictive economic policies in June 1982, including wage and price controls and scaled-back welfare benefits. Mitterrand pledged to stabilize and ultimately reduce the state's share of GNP as well as to reduce the fiscal deficit. In a 1983 New Year's address, he warned that the state must cease proliferating administrative texts and should divest itself of nonessential functions.[22]

In the new approach, as explained by Laurent Fabius, Budget Minister and one of Mitterrand's close associates, "The aim should be [for the state] to transfer better rather than transferring more."[23] The state should act more selectively and therefore more effectively. But what does this mean? The government has used the concept of "rigueur" to distinguish its approach from old-fashioned conservative austerity. *Rigueur* refers to a new mode of development, based on greater solidarity among groups, more equitable sharing of sacrifices, and balance between social justice and economic efficiency.

At this writing, rather than a new vision of state-society relations, *rigueur* has merely meant a shift along the traditional axis of state versus capitalist control of production. Thus, Socialist officials have mostly ended their critique of capitalism, in favor of defending social compromise, investment incentives, and a national effort behind industrial mobilization. Officials as improbable as Jean-Pierre Chevènement, Minister of Research and Industry and leader of what is usually described as the left-wing CERES faction in the PS, have praised the mixed economy as an element in France's national genius.

Yet, *rigueur* might offer more attractive possibilities than Socialist austerity: it might involve a shift from statism and productivism toward greater social self-organization. Such government slogans (and some elements of policies deriving from them) as solidarity, sharing of work, and a new citizenship potentially point in this direction. If the stress here has been on continuity, one should not minimize the substantial impact of Socialist reforms, which constitute the most substantial progressive change in France in this century.

Decentralization is not *autogestion* but it does shift power to the local level, where new progressive struggles may occur on more favorable terrain. The Auroux reforms do not usher in *autogestion* either but they substantially

21. Michel Rocard, "Du Bon usage de la rigueur, I: L'Etat n'est pas fait pour produire," *Le Monde*, July 14, 1982. Also see Rocard's interview in *L'Expansion*, February 4-17, 1983, pp. 59-64.

22. *Le Monde*, January 6, 1983. Also see Jean-Marie Colombani, "Une nouvelle conception de l'Etat," *Le Monde*, January 6, 1983; and Colombani, "A la fois 'plus d'Etat' et 'moins d'Etat' " *Le Monde*, December 16, 1982.

23. Laurent Fabius, "Secouer quelques habitudes," *Le Monde*, December 11, 1982.

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improve the position of French labor. Nationalization need not mean *étatisation*, as the Socialists are fond of saying, if nationalized firms retain a substantial measure of autonomy and provisions are created for worker participation. Thus, Socialist reforms may create the groundwork for further progessive movement. But this is far from the predominant tendency. Chevènement asserted in an interview (*Le Matin*, May 28, 1982) that the government's goal in the current period is the modernized republic, not socialism.[24] De Gaulle would approve. In the absence of a break with the Fifth Republic's rationalizing logic, the answer will remain obvious to the question: who has taken revenge on whom?

24. See my "Modernizing the Republic or Democratic Socialist Transition? Dilemmas of Socialist Strategy in Advanced Capitalism," *The Insurgent Sociologist* (forthcoming, 1983).


# thesis eleven

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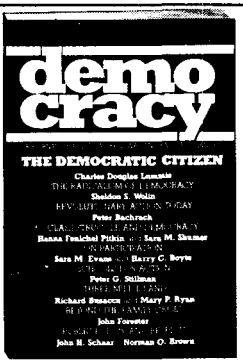


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# FRENCH SOCIALISTS VS. DEINDUSTRIALIZATION: THE STATE IN THE WORLD ECONOMY

by Sharon Zukin

Both before and after May 1981, economic policy offered the Socialists a chance to prove themselves serious contenders for taking state power. The municipal socialism which had enabled them to establish or to maintain strong local bases in various parts of France during the 1970s launched a strategy of economic development by the indirect means at local governments' disposal. Transferring this strategy to the big domain of industrial management and development suggested a means for transforming them from bosses of the *mairie* to masters of the *Elysée*. To do this, however, the Socialists chose to meet their major political competitors on their own ground, by showing that they could run both the state and the economy more productively. In this sense, the goal of *l'alternance* (of governing parties) is just as important as *le changement* (social).

This course of action recalls the postwar crucible in which the V Republic of political mentor (Pierre Mendès-France) and political model (Charles De Gaulle) was forged. For both Mendès and De Gaulle, the state found its function in a politicized but efficient direction of the economy: Growth was tantamount to Power. This function has always assumed priority over the possibility of extending popular control over capital. Indeed, such a goal refers to only one of the three constituencies to which all French parties consider themselves accountable. Beside each party's ideological adherents stand the much more heterogeneous but also infinitely more severe "constituencies" of the Nation and the State. Thus, it becomes more important to them to treat the major problem — as Pierre Massé, one of the "new men" who directed nationalized French industry after World War II, has said — as capitalism in crisis rather than capitalism triumphant. The 1968 events made this no less clear to the new Socialists in 1971 than it was to the old Socialists in 1946. Under these conditions, the campaign against "decadence" which had been evoked in discussions over the management of capital during the early 1950s re-emerged as the Socialists' 1981 electoral platform.

By the time French voters elected Mitterrand, France confronted serious economic distress. As in other advanced capitalist economies, whole industries were dying — from traditional crafts like printing to semi-automated manufacturers of consumer goods like textiles and such heavy providers of capital goods as steel — and it was not clear which other activities might take their place. The great leap forward from peasant to modern industrial society



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had ended by 1968. The internationalization of the economy that Giscard d'Estaing had promoted since that time, first as Finance Minister and then as President, seemed to lead, in the aftermath of the oil "*choc*" of 1974, only to dependency. Certainly the common symptoms of world economic crisis also affected France: lower profit rates, lower rates of investment, increasing business indebtedness at rising interest rates, and greater competition from foreign-made products in both domestic and export markets around the world. But in contrast to the American preoccupation with inflation, the French at the end of the 1970s were most concerned with unemployment.[1] As the unemployment rate mounted before May 1981, the back pages of *Le Monde* filled with reports of business failures and quarterly losses. Such reverses afflicted large corporations whose product divisions were supposed to act as French "champions" in world markets as well as small firms which still depended on a local market. If the French had given vent to the mordant pessimism which lurked beneath the Socialists' electoral success, they might have combined Barre's directness with that of Cohn-Bendit to say, "We are all *canards boîteux*."[2]

Many French voted for the Socialists in the expectation that they would be able to banish this mood of pessimism and at least several of its sources. Quite logically, then, the Socialists' economic policy had to include both objective and subjective goals. They proposed the reindustrialization of France under qualitatively different social conditions, or economic growth *with* redistribution. No matter how irrational Right-wing opponents sought to make this policy appear, or how contradictory the alliances on which its realization relied, the Socialists enjoyed a distinct initial advantage over their predecessors. The French had seen through Giscard's ideological attempt to revalorize manual work (in order, as some observers pointed out, to accustom native French workers to take over the jobs of immigrant laborers). They had also perceived Giscard's callousness in the face of factory shutdowns and regional despair. In contrast to such behavior, the Socialists were *serious* about arresting economic decline.[3]

1. Radical critiques of economic crisis in the two countries also differed. In France, such critique focused on the loss of domestic markets to imports in basic as well as consumer goods, economic decision making on the basis of "financial" instead of "industrial" criteria, and decentralization of industrial production. In the U.S., radical critique mentioned disaccumulation and disinvestment, the transfer of investment into nonproductive activities, and plant shutdowns. Of course, criticism reflected different market structures and different degrees of state intervention in major industries (such as steel).

2. Prime Minister Barre criticized the continued though wounded existence of troubled firms or "limping ducks" (not to be confused with American "lame ducks"). In an equally famous phrase, Cohn-Bendit ten years earlier had identified all oppressed French people with the fate of German Jews.

3. Seriousness about economic decline also characterized the right-wing party led by Jacques Chirac. The Socialists' seriousness did not overcome a vagueness about what they would do to revitalize French industry when they won power. Aside from nationalization, "winning back the domestic market," redeveloping strategic basic industries (e.g., autos, computers, electronics, aerospace, steel), and developing industries of the future (e.g. space, telecommunications, alternative energy, bio-industries), the socialists did not really have the sort of "industrial policy" whose absence they decried in Giscard.

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To foster both confidence in the economic future and the competitive ability on which such a future would depend, the government at first offered Keynesianism updated for an era of automation. Even now, their strategy aims at increasing investment, entrepreneurialism, and productivity. Best exemplified by the highly competitive and long nationalized car maker, the Régie Renault, the program requires transforming the production process through the introduction of largely automated shops and paying a great deal of attention to both the commercial end of the business (e.g., developing and promoting new product lines) and labor relations (e.g., gaining the active consent of Renault workers, through their majority union, the CGT, for using robots in auto production). In order to maintain the tentative business and labor confidence which will make these policies work, the government has to keep demonstrating that the French economy under socialist guidance does not feature more of the same policies which the voters rejected in May 1981.

But this involves certain contradictions. To the business constituency, especially to the *patrons* of small and medium-size firms whom the Socialists hope to woo permanently away from the Center Right, the government has to show that socialist economic policy reduces the traditional *dirigisme* of the state. However, to the labor constituency, especially the vote-getting, communist CGT, the government has to show that socialist economic policy keeps the *patrons'* cost-cutting (or wage-reducing and job eliminating) proclivities in line. Nevertheless, what will probably be decisive for both constituencies is whether socialist economic policy *works*. The tension between attitude and efficacy tends to strengthen the interdependence of objective and subjective forces in policy consideration. The necessity of getting economic results also underlies the futility of the Socialists' attempts, on the one hand, to flee Gaullist and Giscardian antecedents and, on the other hand, to reject the models posed by other countries, notably the U.S. In this sense, it is striking that the former Minister of Research and Industry, Left-wing Socialist Jean-Pierre Chevènement, encouraged the heads of the nationalized firms at a meeting in August 1982 by citing F.D.R.: "*Il n'y a rien à craindre que la crainte elle-même.*" Like the U.S. in the New Deal period, like the much-admired industrial development of contemporary Japan, or, indeed, like any French regime back to Colbert, the Socialist government's mastery over economic forces requires the increasing intervention of the state. In this sense, the Socialists risk making the state even stranger than it was under Giscard without inducing the popular mobilization that their campaign literature promised.

*L'Etat*

The problems which affect France's economic viability require international brokering for even a partial resolution. Four such problems which confronted the Socialists during their first year in office were inflation, devaluation, finding France's "natural" markets, and attracting new investment. Effective representation of national interest in the brokering process over these issues requires a greater degree of aggressiveness *vis-à-vis* the out-

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side world and a greater degree of domestic social peace (or social discipline) than either private-sector entrepreneurs or Giscardian governments were able to muster. Thus taking steps toward their (partial) resolution puts the government in danger of appearing more nationalist than socialist.

First, the government has dealt with inflation caused by both high American interest rates and the domestic wage-price spiral. Although their "success" in seeing a lower rate of inflation was partly conditioned by factors outside their control — the result of American monetary policy, for the most part, but also the tail-end of the Barre government's effect on the economy — the Socialists decided on direct action by imposing, immediately after their first anniversary in office, a four-month freeze on prices and wages. The second issue the government confronted was the over-valuation of the French franc. Biting the bullet of electoral mistrust (though timing its decision for a non-election year), the government accepted a long overdue, two-stage devaluation forced mainly by German and Benelux export competition. Another devaluation followed the local elections of March 1983. Third, the government has tried to reconstitute a French-influenced sphere in the world economy. Building on the legacies of several colonial pasts, the French are selling some high-technology products and mass consumer goods to other advanced industrial societies while aiming capital goods and nuclear power facilities at economies on a lower level of development. On the one hand, this sales policy gives France a base in the Mediterranean (especially in partnership with the new Spanish Socialist government) and North Africa; on the other hand, it leads to stength in the Middle East and the Indian Ocean. Fourth, the government has tried to convince multinational investors of the tenability of investing in France. The government's case includes the usual assurances about productivity and profitability, e.g., labor force qualifitions, labor peace, and usable infrastructure. Obviously, the government has not resigned itself to the indiscriminate deindustrialization which appeared imminent in May 1981. But assuring the resolution of these four problems — by monitoring prices and wages and contending with foreign monetary policy, accepting another currency devaluation, reconstituting a French-influenced economic sphere, and drumming up multinational investment in France — requires a newly zealous and active state.

Finding the most efficient form of state intervention and the level on which such intervention is most effective also requires some restructuring of the state apparatus. Of course, the Socialists have kept the basic institutional mechanisms of the V Republic, especially presidential rule, the powerful ministries of Finance and Industry, and the interministerial committees and subministerial agencies which have been known to dictate rather than coordinate policy (such as the master builder, urban-cum-economic-development agency DATAR). Nevertheless, a certain amount of reshuffling occurred by the end of the first year in power. First, both the form and the level of state intervention in the economy were affected by the promised "reforms"

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of nationalization and decentralization. Their symbolic value has a real underpinning in the ability they offer the state to target industrial and regional investment, as well as to coordinate efforts to generate investment capital on a sectoral and a regional basis. Second, the symbolic cabinet nominations that were made during 1981 yielded, by summer 1982, to real policy shifts within the government which portended, in turn, changes in the state's mode of functioning.

President Mitterrand, for example, had named the well-known and relatively non-ideological Delors and Dreyfus to head Finance and Industry, respectively, in order to reassure anxious state leaders, particularly in the U.S., about the Socialists' economic levelheadedness. A year later, Delors was still setting economic policy, but the aging, ailing Dreyfus was replaced by Chevènement, the only cabinet-level Socialist who claimed to mount a concerted counterattack against deindustrialization. Furthermore, Industry was merged Japanese-style with Chevènement's former ministry, Research and Development. Meanwhile, Chevènement's colleague from the Left wing of the Socialist Party, Nicole Questiaux, who had been named in 1981 to head a new Ministry of National Solidarity, in which she oversaw the French welfare system, was replaced in 1982 by party administrator Pierre Bérégovoy. Questiaux had made commitments to the most disadvantaged social constituencies. Replacing her with Bérégovoy signaled the government's inability to bear their fiscal cost. Finally, the revamped central state apparatus as it emerged by fall 1982 — including government ministries, administrative councils in nationalized firms, and tripartite (state-labor-management) commissions — strengthened the state's presence in each of three major policy areas: direct investment, social expenditures, and labor rights. This reinforced presence was intended to accomplish both historical and political tasks of rationalization and integration which the previous regime had been either unable or unwilling to carry out.[4]

*1. Direct Investment* To a great extent, the state's direct investment is committed to streamlining and modernizing the industrial core which now belongs to the public sector. Because the nationalized firms include — partly by design and partly by default — both "sunrise" and "sunset" industries, the state has to finance two basic types of restructuring: plant modernization with high-technology equipment and recuperation of old industrial plant for reuse by alternate economic activities. Certainly, high-technology new construction represents a more glamorous attempt to ford the stream toward reindustrialization. But revalorizing the old industrial infrastructure and either parcelling it out among small local suppliers or converting it to service-sector use also represents an important and, for the most part, belated effort

4. One of the conditions which changed somewhat between May 1981 and June 1982, and which affected the direct involvement of the state, particularly the new Ministry of Research and Industry, in industrial management, was the resignation of several directors of nationalized corporations. These departures reduced the already thin layer of industrial and managerial expertise on which the Socialists could draw.

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to halt the tide of deindustrialization. Moreover, clearing out such old industrial infrastructure as coal mines and steel mills so that their sites may be reused is very expensive. Regional governments in two areas with major implantations of this sort — the North and the Lorraine — are already calculating the costs which are involved and arguing for the major share of these costs to be borne by the central state. Apart from financial considerations, the state influences decisions about re-use through its representatives (nominated by the President of the Republic) in the administrative councils (i.e., boards of directors) of both the nationalized firms (e.g., in steel, chemicals, and coal) to which these sites belong and the nationalized banks which will help finance re-use.

Also, in collaboration with the nationalized local banks, the state is committed to financing the indirect costs of physical restructuring by relocating the labor force which is displaced by rationalization. Certainly the steelworkers who booed Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy when he visited his home region of the North at the end of November 1982 do not believe that the thousand new jobs projected by the implantation of "robotized" or automated production in their area will absorb the unemployment created by the continued consolidation of steelmaking capacity. Nevertheless, it is the state which will almost entirely bear the costs of job creation, through "extraordinary financing," subcontracting, and implanting units of both competitive, high-technology and noncompetitive public enterprises. The banks claim that their participation in such projects is founded on a rigorous lending policy. In contrast to the banks, however, the state contributes subsidies, including outright funding, loan guarantees, and job-related payments to employers. These subsidies existed under Giscard's administration. But local industrialists complained that the ministries which controlled the funds turned a deaf ear to their pleas. Indeed, the largest share of state subsidies for troubled and/or job-creating firms had gone to the largest, seemingly most viable companies. The Socialists' effort to create jobs through branching and subcontracting from the nationalized firms, as well as subsidizing the relatively small, local firms (which, in fact, do a disproportionate share of job-creation), increases the state's direct investments.[5]

2. *Social Expenditure* For both financial and political reasons, the Mitterrand government's initial enthusiasm for spending to increase aggregate demand soon turned into a sour struggle to hold the line on social expenditures. Fortunately for the French, no individualistic ideological fringe proposes dismantling the whole social security system of old age pensions, medical benefits, family allowances, guaranteed minimum wage, unemployment insurance, and layoff indemnities. Thus, although consumers' purchasing power has been reduced, at least a minimum standard of living remains assured. "Austerity," however, now overshadows the government's goal of economic growth, and the relation between forced investment and full

5. However, as Alain Lipietz points out, the amount budgeted for the nationalized industries in 1982 merely equals their 1981 losses.

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employment remains to be demonstrated in the public's mind. What indeed does austerity mean? The organized working class needs a state-provided cushion against the real losses an austerity period imposes; but the more prosperous strata of middle-class wage-earners may well want to "rationalize" some entitlements. The government has made a two-tiered reply: trying to cut welfare costs (without the Barre government's movement toward reprivatizing health and welfare service provision) and shifting the tax burden of welfare expenses from employers to households. Hence the rise of the somewhat mysterious phrase, at the time of Questiaux's departure from the cabinet, referring to "the *fiscalisation* of social expenditures." Pressed, on the one hand, by new levels of state indebtedness and, on the other hand, by the impoverishment of various funding systems (notably the pension and the unemployment funds) financed in part by employers' contributions, the government may well have to face the task of a fiscal overhaul of the state.

3. *Labor Rights*. The government lacks the electoral strength to force French employers to accept a bilateral bargaining system with labor — and probably also lacks the ideological impetus to reduce the state's presence in labor negotiation. But the government has taken important steps toward integrating the lowest-paid and least-protected workers, who are often hired on a part-time, temporary, or contractual basis, and/or are also immigrant labor, into the system of procedural rights which are guaranteed to organized labor. In part, the government has been motivated by its own sense of honor or duty, particularly in seeking to normalize the status and contracts of casual labor. This motivation has also influenced the government to raise the minimum wage (which, in France, is conditioned by consumer prices). But the government, and the labor unions as well, have to some degree been jolted into action by an important series of strikes led by the largely unorganized, immigrant workers who fill most jobs in the less automated part of the auto industry based in Paris.

In April, September, and December 1982, these workers initiated short but fierce strikes against the private car-makers Talbot (a division of Peugeot) and Citroën. They were joined belatedly by the "white"-dominated CGT and CFDT. Unlike union-led strikes, the immigrants' action was directed only secondarily against low wages. Essentially their demands expressed the relative grievances of the bottom rung of the labor ladder. These grievances gained added drama by virtue of the workers' minority groups status. But they were also crucial to the entire work force because of their implications for the reshaping of labor in a time of economic no-growth. Basically the auto workers expressed two types of demands. First, they wanted recognition of their professional needs as semi-skilled workers who largely fill dead-end jobs. This demand required a qualitative resolution of issues of job mobility and career advancement, which was offered by redefining their job classifications and where they fit into a career hierarchy. The second set of

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demands concerned recognition of the workers' individual and collective needs as minority group members, mostly Muslim, with strong family ties in other countries (mainly in North Africa and Turkey). These demands also suggested qualitative changes in work life. Their resolution included providing prayer breaks during work time and a fifth week of annual vacation for journeys home.

Significantly, as in 1968, the workers' qualitative demands influenced the development of qualitatively different methods of conflict resolution. From an organizational viewpoint, the most remarkable effect of the 1982 strikes was the Solomon-like judgment that the government-appointed mediator, Jean-Jacques Dupeyroux, brought to bear on the negotiation process. Dupeyroux divided the workers' grievances into two fundamental types of labor rights: the "classical" right to bargain over wages and working conditions and an innovative right to dignity and personal consideration on the job. Each of these rights was to be overseen by a specially-appointed commission made up of representatives from the employer, labor unions in the plants, and the state. Dupeyroux also decided that in both current and future strike settlements labor and management should be obligated to seek mediation. Such mediation would be guaranteed, overseen, and presided over by the state. Although labor-management relations had included the possibility of mediation since the early 1950s, it had seldom evoked much enthusiasm among either labor or management, and so it had seldom been used. Dupeyroux's "compromise" provided for continuous sessions of the tripartite mediating commissions until the strike settlement was realized. Thus, not only did he assure the state's continued presence in labor negotiation, but he also intensified the state's role in policing labor rights. In the area of wages and work conditions, the devolution of this role on the subministerial *Inspection du travail* places it firmly within the state apparatus. Even so, the government has not been able to assimilate immigrant workers or contain their protests. A new spurt of strikes in the less competitive plants of the auto industry in 1983 evoked the socialists' least tolerant response.

Integrating all job holders into a state-recognized labor force does not necessarily contradict the contraction of the state's social budget and retrenchment in the nationalized industries. State action in all three areas may be part of an overall rationalization process which constitutes, as the Prime Minister and others say, a new "*réalisme à la française*." The important point is that this realism has been fostered by the state rather than by any "private" group and thus it forms part of the social contract. This reaffirms the French state's traditional claim to be the best representative of the general interest. It will be more complicated for the Socialists to increase the state's activity in representing this interest without seeming to discipline the lower classes or asphyxiating the initiative of those who are supposed to show it.

*The Local State*

The economic and social problems of deindustrialization are keenly felt on

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local and regional levels where unemployment in manufacturing has not been absorbed by job creation in advanced industrial or service sectors. Indeed, the brief hope held by ambitious, Left-wing local officials at the end of the 1970s that high-level tertiary-sector activities could be dispersed throughout France, particularly in those regions most affected by industrial job loss, turned out to be an illusion. France does not have the depth or breadth of financial services on which such jobs would expand, and those activities which have grown prefer to concentrate their offices in Paris (or even to set them up abroad). Dealing with the regional effects of deindustrialization thus requires the sort of direct investment and indirect costs that were mentioned before, as well as financial inducements to underemployed workers for early or voluntary retirement. (The precedent for this was set, of course, by settlements in the steel industry beginning in 1966.) But the Socialist government has also diverted funds to regions and localities in order to encourage investment, entrepreneurialism, and productivity.

In general, investment policy in France since the end of the 1960s was characterized by the state's progressive disengagement from financing all but the largest, most competitive industries and from all local expenditures with the exception of some important new industrial or research-oriented cities (e.g., Dunkerque and Villeneuve-d'Ascq, respectively, in the North). The State's disengagement was paralleled by the diversification of successful medium-size local firms into nonproductive activities and small employers' sale or abandonment of their plants. High rates of regional unemployment represent only one side of the coin; the other side shows formerly autonomous factory owners jockeying for new relations of dependency, the state and local government trying to facilitate a withdrawal from industry without provoking social warfare, and the development of "ghettos" in towns and regions whose urban-industrial infrastructure and partly immigrant population have been devalorized. Starved for new investment, such threatened regions as the North and the Lorraine tend to protect their interests in similar ways even though they have different political configurations. For years the locality in France has vacillated between acting as the lowest transmission belt in the state apparatus and taking some initiative as the representative of local interest. At this point, as local officials transform it into a means of generating investment capital, the locality has a chance of becoming, for the first time in modern French history, a truly local state.

Since the mid-seventies, for example, the North and the Lorraine have evolved a regional policy which contradicted the national strategy of advancing "niches" in the world economy. Particularly in the North, well in advance of the 1981 elections, local Keynesian alliances formed to manage the crisis of local capital. These alliances grouped elected officials, local employers who were often the heads of traditional, family-owned firms, and some real estate developers. Not all elected officials or all *patrons* were equally interested. On the one hand, Left-wing municipal governments, particularly in the Socialist-

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dominated cities of the North, led the way; on the other hand, the *patronat* in conservative regions like the Lorraine found their resistance to state intervention even on the local level confirmed by the liberal stance of their elected officials. But by 1975, even the *patronat* of regionally dominant firms, like the textile *patrons* of the North, fell into line. They were really reproducing on the local level the opening that had been offered that year by the national Chamber of Commerce. The initiative was finally taken up by the new personnel, often recruited from Paris, which staffed some government offices in the regions after the 1977 municipal elections. These local governments' major action was to extend business subsidies that solidified a cross-class alliance. Though this example had limited consequences in reindustrializing the North, it gained national significance after May 1981 when the mayor of Lille, the regional capital, became the Prime Minister of France.

In the Upper Lorraine, however, the dominant steel industry which was run from Paris and Communist-dominated local governments were not inclined to pursue coalitions. Nevertheless, by 1982, the conservative mayor of Metz had begun to explore the possibilities of forming a group to experiment with regional state intervention. Certainly a precedent for local economic action had been set in the years following the 1974 recession, as municipal governments of every political hue pleaded for central state aid to keep troubled industries afloat. The effort to keep jobs in their cities was somewhat reinforced by commissions for the reindustrialization of these regions, in which local private-sector representatives joined elected officials with some back-up from DATAR to go prospecting for new industrial implantations. During this time, local capitalists tried to generate investment capital locally without relinquishing control over their firms to outside investors from either multinational corporations or subministerial super agencies. In any event, the state did not show an interest in obtaining equity in traditional firms.

By 1981 the Socialists were well aware of the inadequacies of such mechanisms for generating local investment capital. Indeed, the unwillingness to take risks in extending loans demonstrated by local banks and mixed, public sector-private sector regional development agencies (or SDRs) had rendered them seemingly moribund. With the nationalization of local banks in early 1982, however, the banks became tied to the national credit system. Moreover, the SDRs had always been tied by their by-laws to the central state apparatus. These ties enabled the government to penetrate both institutions with its investment priorities. Thus the banks and the SDRs have become places where local and national power stand just behind every investment decision. In the most concrete way, the issue of who wields power emerges in the distribution of investment funds and decisions concerning those who will participate in the distribution. Not only do these issues imply whether a social stratum of local entrepreneurs will live or die, but they also imply — through the still dominant role of the bank — how elected officials penetrate or incorporate the ranks of local capital.

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The recent case of saving from liquidation two hydraulic shovel plants which used to belong to the bankrupt American firm, International Harvester, illustrates how the government wishes these mechanisms to work.[6] Without either a buyer from outside the area or an expression of interest from the local *patronat*, the firm was taken over by eight of its executives, who invested half a million francs of their own funds for a business with a decreasing annual turnover of just over 100 million francs and annual losses of 40 to 50 million francs. Turning the company into a cooperative and continuing to act as its management, the executives received a loan package of an additional 30 million francs from a syndicate comprised, on the one hand, of three major banks and, on the other hand, of various public and parapublic agencies: an interministerial committee for regional development, a central state fund for small and medium-size firms, and SDRs in each of the two plants' regions. Furthermore, local government at each of the plant sites and three regional executive and legislative organs issued loan guarantees. Following an industrial consultant's earlier recommendation issued when the plants were still run by International Harvester, the previous management had encouraged early retirement and voluntary quits to reduce the work force from 600 to 300. The current management has laid off another 130 employees. They are seeking to maintain their productive relation with the plants through subcontracting.

Should such resolutions to threatened plant shutdowns be considered a new form of transnational "rationalization?" Before the Socialists took office, local government's direct investment in plant financing was strictly illegal and thus as unfeasible as in the U.S. (This was the substance, in fact, of many local governments' complaints in declining regions prior to May 1981.) New pressures on the banking system and new rights for local and regional government which facilitate their direct investment conform to the government's general position in favor of socializing entrepreneurial risk. However, such changes do not reduce complications. The major risk-takers in local investment decisions play to both a "higher" and a "lower" constituency. On the one hand, nationalized local banks are still accountable to their administrative councils (and more importantly, perhaps, to the Finance Minister) for their investment decisions, but they also want to retain good relations with the local capitalists who will run or continue to run local industry. On the other hand, elected officials will be held accountable for job creation by the local electorate while they will also be held accountable for the expenditure of "extraordinary" credits by the central state. Thus, local investment decisions will constantly involve conciliation between economic rationalization and electoral strategy. It remains to be seen whether such conciliation can be managed among the central and local state and the banks without creating the one factor which has not emerged so far: an effective planning mechanism.

*Past and Prologue*

Clearly, the Socialists have tried to reverse the major economic and social

6. *Le Monde*, December 2, 1982.

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trends of the post-Gaullist past. In doing so by emphasizing national interest and multi-class *rassemblement*, they may have begun to pave the way toward a neo-Gaullist future. The government has tried to halt the internationalization of the economy under multinational corporations' rules. It has also eliminated an incipient tendency toward reprivatizing collective goods from hospital care to television stations (neglecting the latter remains one of Giscard's regrets). The Socialists have also questioned the validity of mammoth cultural projects begun under Giscard, indicating a preference for cultural mobilization at the community level. But despite imposing a temporary moratorium on funding for the big science and technology museum and the Museum of Twentieth Century (both centralized, by the way, in Paris), the government could not deny the real benefits such projects will bring to several areas of national life: not least, the construction industry, but also tourism, education, and international prestige. Moreover, in contrast to the anachronistic classicism and super-modern elitism that Pompidou and Giscard fostered, such projects suit the valorization of modernity that the economic ministries promote. In the most significant contrast, however, the Socialists have tried to reverse the sense of economic defeatism evoked over the past few years. Indeed, the new government's activism has inspired a largely contestatory though non-institutionalized response on the part of workers and *patrons* alike, and the Socialists face a problem of how to channel or contain it.

It should also be emphasized that the Socialists still reject all existing models of response to deindustrialization. They are appalled by Britain's resignation and feel the U.S. has fallen hopelessly behind. Nor do they believe they could or should emulate the discipline of the Japanese. Furthermore, despite the remarks of some well-meaning commentators who make them appear like vectors that cross in the night, the Mitterrand government is quite different from the Reagan administration. They have different approaches to common problems mostly because the French government upholds that part of etatism which provides for the state to direct and cushion economic restructuring. Nevertheless, today's restructuring imposes a number of common steps: the removal of inefficient, especially small, producers and the disappearance of the jobs they have supported; reinvestment which depends on fairly centralized coordination; an even greater reduction in the social wage than previously experienced. these are the areas in which the Socialists' good intentions will carry the greatest cost. Even the modified Keynesianism of Year II costs time and money.

Clearly, the Socialists hope they can have it all: both the high-tech transformation of Renault and the survival of the less competitive Citroën and Peugeot; both the working-class Socialist and Communist electorate of the North and the Socialist engineers and intellectuals of Grenoble. The municipal elections of March 1983 lost both these electorates (in Roubaix and Grenoble); it remains to be seen whether industrial investment can be more successful.

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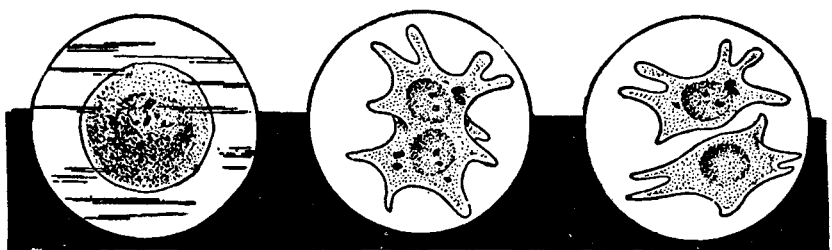
They have tried to play the capital markets from both the financial and the political sides. Within such a framework, it is easier to manage consensus around a capitalism which would be revitalized, not jeopardized, by state direction. These, after all, emerged as the electoral stakes of 1983. These stakes — a perception which replaced Chevènement as Minister of Research and Industry with the more bloodless Laurent Fabius — so different from the consensus which eventually brought De Gaulle back to power. In the current consensus, as a high civil servant recalls of the earlier period, "Saint-Simon is much more important than Marx!"[7]

Yet the reprimand administered by the German mark suggests that no French policy has responded to the demands of the international capitalist economy. Giscard presided over the demise of both national capital and industrial labor unions. Mitterrand has been hauled over th shoals of trade deficits and fiscal crisis. It is not clear that the state can generate enough investment capital to spark growth in a low-profit or non-profit situation. If some nationalized industries are, nonetheless, successful, can they be forced to reinvest in France? Under such pressures, options are reduced. The electoral majority of May 1981 casts an enormous shadow over the government's shoulder, but there are only a few steps between a "*réalisme à la française*" and a Gallic version of monetarism.

7. Simon Nora, quoted in François Fourquet, *Les comptes de la puissance* (Paris: Encres, 1980), p. 181.



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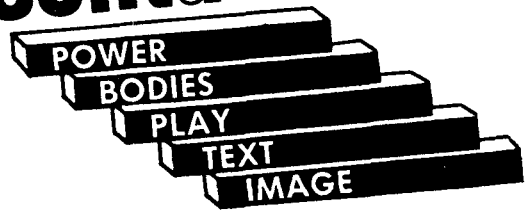


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# GAULLISM WITH A HUMAN FACE?

## by Moishe Gonzales

Any analysis of the contemporary situation in France runs up against a glaring paradox: how can the objective political strength of the socialist government be squared with the seemingly uninspired, stalemated status of its policy initiatives? Previously in the West, socialists had come to power only by participating in fragile coalitions or commanding precarious majorities. In either case, socialist governments had little room to maneuver. Hence, their policy options were constrained by external forces — some allied, some oppositional. Moreover, parliamentary rather than presidential systems further limited the autonomy and relative clout of executive power when, indeed, such power was vested in a prime minister. The French socialists are limited by none of these contingencies. In fact, one might say that never before had a socialist government come to power on more favorable political terms. In France, the Socialist Party commands an absolute majority in the National Assembly, as well as the guarantee of seven interrupted years of executive power vested in the constitutionally powerful position of the President of the Republic. As for their opposition, the Right is divided and discredited and incapable of blocking legislative projects. The Communists, meanwhile, have never been weaker, never less of a factor in French politics — despite the subaltern role they play in the cabinet. Thus, if there has been weakness and uncertainty in socialist policy, the cause must be located not in external political contingencies but rather within French socialism itself.

Could it be that the Emperor has no clothes? Thus far, discussions of socialism have focused either on strategic questions concerning electoral politics (alliance formation, multiple constituencies, "broadening the base," etc.) or instrumental questions concerning the so-called "transition to socialism." What was presumed — or taken for granted — in both cases was some minimal degree of consensus even clarity as to the meaning of socialism itself; i.e., the end toward which strategies and tactics aimed. The weaknesses of liberalism, both the laissez-faire and interventionist type, were known to all, and regarding communism there was never any shortage of negative models. Social Democracy, after Bad Godesberg, renounced any transcendent aspirations, while in France itself "social democracy" never generated either a following or enthusiasm — in fact, no greater insult could be traded on the French Left than to be called "social democratic." What then, in positive terms, does socialism mean?



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*From Central Planning to Self-Management*

Originally conceived as the necessary culmination of a competitive capitalism gradually shifting toward a monopoly phase, socialism has long since lost its meaning to the point of surviving only as a political myth. As such, it can still attract disparate factions whose unity can be manufactured only by allowing a multitude of their contradictory subjective interpretations to coexist as underdeveloped projections into an otherwise vague and undefined mythological "socialism." The original notion of socialism as the centrally planned socio-economic organization of society has been discredited by the experiences of advanced and even not-so-advanced industrial societies where central planning has proven itself even more wasteful and counterproductive than the competitive capitalism it was meant to displace and rationalize.

It was never merely a question of *poor executions* of an otherwise fundamentally sound idea. As such, they cannot be remedied by means of better modes of implementation (a typical communist apology). The ineradicable flaw of central planning is that it carries to its ultimate consequences that identity logic Adorno indicated as the terminal disease of capitalist society. Extracted from its esoteric theoretical formulation, this simply means that the irreplaceable creative activity sustaining human life and growth is reduced purely to its formal-rational component to the point of allowing its existence only as what the bureaucratic definition of reality legitimates as meaningful. To the extent that everything is always more and other than what the concept manages to reproduce intellectually, the plan as the mega-concept necessarily ends up unfolding a logic having only a unilateral and distorting relation to what it seeks to apprehend and articulate. In an open, relatively non-bureaucratic and flexible context, it is generally possible and ordinarily painless to make the necessary adjustments such that a shifting and constantly redefined concept tends to closely approximate its elusive referent and thus successfully carry out its rationalizing role. Since these readjustments tend to disrupt the realization of the central plan and are, therefore, bureaucratically resisted, the plan is continually threatened unless it is constantly and subversively subsidized by a subjective commitment to its realization. This allows the required adjustments to be made, but only *in spite of* the ruling bureaucratic rationality.

But central planning also tends to undermine this pre-rational injection of commitment since the interests of the part do not usually correspond perfectly to those of the whole. Thus, whenever the two do not coincide — most of the time — the subjective commitment leans towards particular interests at the expense of their general counterpart. This generates contradictions whose resolution eventually threatens the democratic character of socialism and the integrity of the plan. Then the primacy of the plan must be *enforced*. To do so, however, renders socialism increasingly authoritarian and hierarchical, to the point of resorting to terror in contexts where democratic traditions do not otherwise checkmate it. In either case, the net result is the same: a society split

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between the managers and the managed, whose structural inequality and irreconciliability generates contradictions even more intense than the capitalist ones it displaces. It is not suprising, therefore, that from a working class ideology in the 19th century socialism is rapidly turning into the outlook of what has been inappropriately labelled the "new class" in mid- and late 20th century. For these reasons and others, socialism as socio-economic planning displacing the market has tended to give way to its de-centralized opposite: self-management.

This more democratic and seemingly more egalitarian version of socialism, however, runs into even more formidable contradiction. As Gorz and others have pointed out, the modern organization of technology has developed according to the capitalist imperatives of guaranteeing hierarchy, discipline and subordination. The resulting Taylorized system renders democractic procedures either dysfunctional to the overall industrial efficiency or they become external to the actual running of the enterprise, thus reintroducing all of the problems associated with a politically monitored but autonomously functioning bureaucratic operation. To the limit, successfully functioning self-managed enterprises tend to split workers into two separate roles: that of Taylorized functionaries subject to the ineluctable logic of modern industrial discipline and division of labor, and that of owners only externally concerned with overall economic performance. As such, without what today is a practically impossible restructuring of science and technology, the self-management strategy leads to the reinvention of capitalism, with workers essentially reduced to the role of minor individual entrepreneurs.

Given this state of affairs, any modern socialist party today must deal with socialism as a political myth whose appeal is primarily to quasi-religious collective feelings of solidarity with general welfare, social justice and human emancipation. And to the extent that this is the case, these socialist parties become umbrella parties, not unlike the U.S. Democratic Party, encompassing a broad variety of currents — often contradictory — whose collaboration under a shared political banner allows successful participation in electoral struggles. This is precisely what has happened with the French Socialist Party.

*The Two Faces of French Socialism*

If and when such a party manages to win an election, however, and the myth has to be translated into concrete policies, a whole new series of problems begin to surface. The previous expedient *modus operandi* must give way to a new one. Thus, within French socialism today one can analytically differentiate two distinct logics, each conforming, respectively, to successive stages in the development of the contemporary Socialist Party. The first, which runs from the Congress of Epinay to victories in the 1981 presidential and legislative elections, concerns the elaboration of a new ideology and the aggregation of a new socialist electoral bloc which will, on the one hand, displace the communists within the traditional working class, Left wing electorate and, on the

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other, reach out to new constituencies either previously apolitical or disaffected from Gaullism in the state of decline (women, students, managers, ecologists, gay rights activitists, etc.). Here one confronts an ideology of movement, of engagement and social mobilization aimed at "changing life" through the activation and enrichment of civil society. Not saddled with the responsibilities of power, the Socialist party could function as an unbrella organization, drawing to itself a heterogenous collection of groups with irreconcilably separate interests but demanding no coherent unification — myth, movement, and the need for a *changement* sufficed. The second logic, which began the day the Socialists assumed power and continues today, concerns the articulation and execution of a governing program which must not only partially satisfy the cacophony of demands it itself encouraged, but also overcome the stasis bequeathed by the Right — specifically, to re-industrialize France and modernize its institutional structure, yet in a way which does not exacerbate but indeed reduces social inequality. It was here that French socialism revealed its theoretical shallowness and substantive bankruptcy.

Notwithstanding its presumably "different" project of socio-economic reconstruction, French socialism finds itself constrained by the same contradictions confronting every other advanced industrial society in the 1980s. The post-WWII system of international stratification based on a corresponding international division of labor was first eroded by the growing integration of the Third World into the world economy and began to break down with whatever minimally successful development did take place in those developing countries. It gradually became difficult for advanced industrial societies to effectively compete internationally in fields which the Third World began to penetrate. The net effect of this change has been that entire industrial sectors have dramatically declined thus generating socially unacceptable levels of unemployment in industries such as steel, textiles, automobiles, appliances or wherever Western multinationals could not successfully keep out intensive international competition.

Thus, French Socialists confront problems which are not at all different from those of Right-wing administrations in, e.g., England and the U.S. Whereas, however, Right-wing administrations unburdened by immediate social responsibilities, could undertake projects of socio-economic rationalization primarily on the promise of successful economic performance, French socialists are bound more severely by the immediate objective interests of their particular constituencies. It has become quite clear that the advanced industrial societies' response to the spread of industrialization, and thus the declining profitability of the particular internationally competitive industries affected, has been to focus on re-directing investments to those monopoly sectors where high profitability could not be so readily challenged by developing countries either because of the high capital-intensive nature of the industries themselves or because of the lack of a highly developed and effective technological infrastructure. The high-tech route as the solution to the

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present crisis does revitalize profitability but tends to marginalize large sectors of the advanced industrial societies' traditional working classes thus generating high unemployment, overburdening the welfare system, and ultimately threatening the state's fiscal viability.

The Rocard wing of the French Socialist Party sees the socialist state planning made possible by nationalization and increasing control of investments as an opportunity to overcome the present crisis by modernizing French industry along the high-tech route based on the new masses of professionals and other technologically competent new strata. This strategy confronts the traditional working classes demanding revitalization and modernization of their obsolete and declining industries with, at best, programs of retraining, work-sharing and other unconvincing alternatives. Predicated on the establishment of a new international division of labor whereby the production of internationally competitive — and therefore less profitable — goods is relegated to developing countries, France would concentrate on the more profitable monopoly sectors allowing not only higher profits, but also higher salaries for their respective highly-skilled work force as well as privileged life styles.

The competing CERES wing, however, finds this option unacceptable from the viewpoint of the traditional working classes that have been the historical constituencies of Left parties. The call for "reconquering the domestic markets" by revitalizing the presently declining industries, threatened and in some cases practically annihilated by foreign competition, translates into two policy options equally unacceptable to the high-tech socialists: protectionism against foreign competition and shifting of state investments from highly profitable and capital intensive industries (therefore generating few jobs) in favor of more traditional declining sectors. As Touraine and other critics have pointed out, this would cripple the high-tech sector by restricting potential foreign markets sealed off by the new wave of protectionism and, in the long run, reduce France to the level of a Third World country.

The two strategies thus lead to a dead end. Neither one pursued separately would work, while both pursued simultaneously would essentially cancel each other out. The high-tech strategy would require massive investments, limit social protection programs, neglect (benignly) the problem of structural unemployment, and ultimately increase social inequality by stratifying France into those people in the higher ranks of the invigorated high-tech sector and those trapped in the sunset competitive sectors. If Massachusetts is a relevant test case, since it too chose such a strategy, one finds that few of the traditional industrial workers are re-absorbed; that, ironically enough, there is a de-skilling of labor, now reduced to simple assembly operations; and that such jobs appeal mostly to young, marginal workers looking for an alternative to employment in fast-food chains like McDonalds. In other words, high-tech industries — beyond a small technical stratum — recruit the very same labor domestically which other sectors have for the past decade sought in the Third

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World; furthermore, the more competitive high-tech becomes, the more their assembly operations will be exported to the Third World where labor is cheaper and unorganized (e.g., Atari, which closed its manufacturing plant in California and relocated it in the Far East).

The reconquest of the domestic market strategy would require massive State investments to re-tool obsolete productive facilities, limiting the amount of capital available for the high-tech sector. Given the context of international capitalism, such revived domestic industries could only competitively survive by resorting to tariff protection which, in turn, would limit the export capability of the high-tech sector. This "reindustrialization by import substitution" has echoes of an already failed Third World developmental strategy which, in the long run, would have France slip further behind Germany, Japan and the United States. It would merely postpone France's day of reckoning, since the present standard of living could not be indefinitely sustained with an outmoded, non-competitive productive base. Furthermore, one might note in passing that the insufficiency of her domestic market has often been cited as one of the key historical reasons for France's slow economic growth; the population is simply too limited to sustain growth through any strategy based on the domestic market alone.

Pursuing both strategies simultaneously would cancel each other out. They presuppose mutually exclusive policy choices regarding investments, employment, and tariffs, quite apart from the fact that France possesses neither the capital nor the resources to undertake both initiatives *effectively*; that is, so some critical threshold might be reached, similar to the so-called "take-off point" in primary industrialization. Weak, incremental gains in both sectors would drain the reindustrialization project of its propulsive force, its "multiplier effect." Neither fish nor fowl, unable to swim or fly, France would be left to croak in the swamp of the barely developed.

*Really Existing French Socialism*

It is not surprising that both strategies rely primarily on the State and run counter to the enrichment of civil society promised by the Socialists before their election to office. French political history has witnessed the development of an increasingly powerful State, one which becomes progressively more independent and indispensable *vis-à*-vis the regions, groups and interests of civil society. This is a State which has developed according to its own institutional logic, relatively unaffected by the diverse regimes (monarchies, empires, republic) it endured. This is a State which has generated its own values and rules, which has recruited and trained its own personnel, and which in its own eyes — thanks to the traditions of absolutism, jacobinism, and bonapartism — symbolizes the French nation itself. Its bureaucracy, the most closed and entrenched in the West, is recruited at the summit almost exclusively from the *grandes écoles*, specially created in the 18th and 19th centuries for State service, and particularly from the E.N.A. (École Nationale d'Administration) created in 1945. Just as contemporary Gaullist leadership

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strongly reflects such training and tradition (both Giscard and Chirac are *enarques*, graduates of the E.N.A., and served in the administrative *corps*), the same is true of such important Socialists as Rocard and Attali, to say nothing of Mitterrand's lesser-known brain trust. As Ezra Suleiman, author of the definitive study of French elites, points out, the Left might rhetorically attack the State and the elitist nature of its recruitment, but it never offers concrete programs to curb its power or end its elitism — too many of its own have risen through its ranks and share its *esprit de corps*. At best, the socialists will attempt to redirect the State toward their ends, some of which — like reindustrialization — are coincident with its own. However, what the socialists will never do is change the State itself, conquer it or make it their own (a so-called "Socialist State").

What went hand-in-hand with this *étatisation* in France was a parallel impoverishment of civil society. At least as far back as Tocqueville, observers of France have noted the relative absence of local self-government and voluntary associations, structures mediating between the centralized State and the unorganized masses. Tocqueville suggested that already under the *ancien régime* centralized administration had deprived Frenchmen of the possibility and desire of working together, so that when the Revolution started it would have been impossible to find "even ten men used to acting in concert and defending their interests without appealing to the central power for aid." After the Revolution, the Loi Le Chapelier (1791) declared all intermediary bodies (*corps intermédiaires*) illegal, and thus associations (workers syndicates, in particular) were formally prohibited until the law was rescinded in 1884. A decade later, Durkheim would again underscore the need for "secondary groups" to represent diverse interests and to socialize atomized individuals. "A nation can be maintained only if, between the State and the individual, there is intercalated a whole series of secondary groups near enough to the individuals to attract them strongly in their sphere of action and drag them, in this way, into the general torrent of social life." A half-century later, in his celebrated study of bureaucracy, Crozier would argue that the particularly strong French affinity for bureaucratic organization was principally due to Frenchmen's avoidance of face-to-face relations and informal modes of cooperation. Still today, France has relatively low levels of party and associational membership. French civil society is unlikely to suddenly change this historical pattern and autonomously organize itself.

This asymmetrical relation between the State and civil society suggests the closure of two important options for France. The first, articulated by the Socialists with great fanfare before they were elected, was a mobilization of society aimed at "changing life" through the self-activity of social movements. Implicity, and at times explicitly, it was to redress the imbalance between the State and civil society, favoring the latter as opposed to the former. The Socialists quickly put this project on the back burner and turned off the gas; even if social mobilization were possible, the Socialists have decided to favor

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the State. The second option is one defined by Schmitter and associates as "neo-corporatism." Neo-corporatism recognizes that under conditions of advanced capitalism the State can become functionally overloaded by excessive direct intervention and delegitimated as salient policy issues (e.g., investments, wages, social protection, etc.) become politicized. Thus, the State delegates public authority to limited number of functionally-based, imperatively-ordered interest associations — usually representing capital and labor — who broker among themselves binding agreements ultimately backed by State power. However, as Pierre Birnbaum has argued, the French State is unlikely to accommodate itself to such a dispersal of its centralized power and, in any case, France lacks the type of civil society to make neo-corporatism possible: an infrastructure of associations capable of "governing" their members, and a "bargaining," accommodating attitude very much at variance with French *incivisme* (where the very term *compromis* has pejorative connotations).

What remains for French Socialists is a confused, contradictory, though thoroughly statist approach. Since coming to power, opposed strategies and options within the socialist camp are elaborated and debated less and less. Instead, Mitterrand, the only major socialist without a specific position, who has made a career of aggregating groups and running for office, but never thinking seriously about policy *per se*, personally arbitrates between diverse tendencies. More and more, French socialism becomes Mitterandisme. But, what is this? Something devoid of substance — the pose, the *geste* of an aloof intellectual trying his best to "look Presidential" (in that hopelessly superficial American sense). One might call it "Gaullism with a human face," but at least Gaullism stood for something which allowed it to take advantage of its strength in the Executive and in the National Assembly; it never tripped on its own feet.

The French socialists' variant of traditional French statism finds itself even more constrained in developing viable options than has historically been the case. Unable to deploy the high-tech strategy or its "recover the domestic market" counterpart without incurring unacceptable socio-economic costs, nor able to come up with a combination of both strategies, French socialism can only continue muddling through the management of successive crises as do the administrations of any other advanced industrial societies — irrespective of their political proclivities. Its energy policy remains committed to nuclear energy, its foreign policy still seeks to fill in the international cracks between the two superpowers as a dubious non-imperialist alternative, and its outlook remains essentially nationalist.

The main problem has been and remains the eclipse of the radical imagination. All options remain limited to modifications of a logic of capital which imposes constant growth imperatives anathema to stable forms of social organizations. Efforts to break out of this logic are hardly undertaken and are peculiarly absent from predominent political discourse. The massive new

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problems generated by advanced industrial societies are dealt with only as afterthoughts. The destruction of the environment and its capacity for self-reproduction, the physical impossibility of generalizing the Western consumerist model, the cretinization of the population by the new modes of information and the culture industry, the socialization of a type of individuality able to sustain democratic and participatory institutions, the development of a public sphere free of manipulation and coercion, etc. are themes which tend to fall outside mainstream socialist discourse. Forced to focus all its efforts on the only criterion on which it will be judged — overall economic performance — French socialism remains captive of that French version of capitalist logic it claims to transcend: Gaullism. Unless radical efforts to break with it are undertaken — and not in the direction of the obsolete existing socialist models — the future of French socialism is not at all promising.

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# THE AGONY OF MARXISM AND THE VICTORY OF THE LEFT*

## by Gérard Raulet

*A Paradox*

We have just witnessed an occurrence of a curious kind in France. The change-over in the Government and of the old parliamentary majority, which has been decked out with all the symbolic trimmings of the arsenal of the French Revolution, should not lead us to forget that this transition has come about after a long period of ideological decay which has rotted away the links binding theory and practice. Undoubtedly, this decay is the result of the ideological climate of the Giscard era, and of the historical conditions that seemed to condemn the Left to permanent political isolation. Also, the change in government reflects a deep transformation of sociological reality of which the irresistible, if unconscious, beneficiary has been the Socialist Party. This sociological shift follows from the fact that the ranks of the labor force (what Marx called the "Collective Worker") have been expanded to include salaried employees who are not traditional manual workers: researchers, engineers, middle level managers — all those who participate in the preparation and co-ordination of material production. Marcuse's prediction in *Counter Revolution and Revolt* seems verified: new needs have emerged which both quantitatively and qualitatively the capacity of the system cannot fulfill, (especially in a period of world economic crisis), and which express a general, if undefined, notion of the "quality of life" — a notion which no longer counter poses the working class alone against capital, but pits all dependent classes against the social state managing the process of capital accumulation. Marxism should have taken all of this into account. With the exception of the interest shown by the P.S.U. (Unified Socialist Party) for new forms of social struggle, this is far from having been the case in France. The period after 1968 was one of unrelenting agony, at least in theory, for those who expected more from Marxism than the "*ouvrierisme*" of the Communist Party, or the dogmatism of the contending groups on its left. This painful spectacle was hidden from view for a time by Althusser's epistemological and academic restoration, but finally the agony was just intensified by their pretensions as the guarantors of an Authentic Marxism (as always, demonstrated by a reading of the sacred texts).

As matters now stand, France has elected a Left government at the conclusion of a period culminating with the death of Marxism.[1] Everything has worked out as though political victory was purchased at the price of theoreti-

*Translated by John Mason.

1. *Critique*, No. 392, January 1980. "Le comble du vide."



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cal collapse. The very least one can say is that by pulling out of the Union of the Left, the Communist Party ended up doing the Socialists a service: the underlying dynamic of the Union of the Left continued to work for the Socialists, and was even reinforced by their liberation from the bugbear of the communist menace. Two conclusions of real importance follow from this: first the Union of the Left turned out to be more than a simple understanding between party leaders. It showed itself to be an authentic popular union of the party bases, creating a social dynamic within the field in which the socialist experiment will be played out. Second, the retreat of the spectre of communism squarely confronts the Socialism now in government with the urgent task of developing a theory that corresponds to its practice. Whatever else one may say, the Communist Party continues, if only by reflex, to provide a theoretical identity, or to furnish a Marxist label despite its rigidity, its backwardness in relation to sociological shifts, its resistance to intellectual currents that are renewing Marxism everywhere in Europe, and the confusion which has demoralized its intellectuals. What is infinitely more important is that the notions of self-management or totalitarianism developed by the non-communist Left have not had the same powerful labeling effect. This comes as no surprise, since it does not carry the identity associated with a long tradition.

The Socialist government rejects the social-democratic label. It does not want simply to supervise the social redistribution of wealth. Rather, it seeks to initiate basic reforms directly involving the organization of the forces of production. It has yet to face up to the task of creating its own theoretical identity, although this has been made a little less pressing by the decline of the Marxist label. It is debatable whether the working policy groups within the Socialist party are strong enough to come up with theoretical form to its political practice, or whether there is anywhere a left-wing thought worthy of the name still capable of formulating such a theory. Since we still believe in the absolute importance of this theoretical moment, we must ask whether there is a thought still capable of assuring this fundamental linkage between theory and practice, and of analyzing the capitalist mode of production and its historical transformation in the name of social emancipation. Everywhere one only hears news of a new intellectual project: the elaboration of the categories and slogans of social decomposition, of the end of "Reason in History," and the obsolescence of consensus — in short, the slogans of "post-modernity." Can one be satisfied with the absolutization of the terms of this new inquiry — the description of post-modern society and of its mode of production — and wait while practice itself takes the initiative by showing that history still exists and that within it Reason is still at work (a Reason which understands the historical process as a movement toward emancipation)? We should not be surprised if practice left to itself runs the risk of degenerating into a kind of pragmatism, or that the voyeurism of clever minds should not fail to add their knowing laughter to the exhibitionism of a state obliged to fake the theoretical justification which it lacks by turning to the symbolic stocks of the French Revolution,

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of the Left and of Gaullism — which all combined might, by virtue of charisma and tradition, conceal the poverty of the consensus on which it rests. Those who seek to identify the real movement of the world, hidden beyond appearance, are quite happy to dismiss this crippled consensus by pointing to the world's decomposition. They do not even attempt to reflect on this decomposition dialectically.

*The Collapse of Historical Materialism*

In the preface to the new edition of his *Le Marxisme Introuvable* in 1979, Daniel Lindenberg frankly concedes the exhaustion of historical materialism in France.[2] While in 1973-74 it seemed possible to "open up historical materialism," and find in "the decomposition of post-68 leftism the necessary ferment for a regeneration of the Left," by 1979 such hopes seemed woefully anachronistic. What is noteworthy in this self-criticism, in other respects so much akin to numerous others, is its straight-forward recognition of the disqualification of Marxism from the French intellectual scene. French Marxism was poorly equipped to come to terms with the radical transformation of French society after World War II. The confusion which took hold at the time of the Liberation lasted until the 1960s and generated a long polemic on the "Adventures of the Dialectic" between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. The political developments of the immediate post-war period brought to an end any hopes that the proletariat might seize power, and this disappointment led people to question both the role of the proletariat and the possibility of revolution. By 1948, with the publication of his work *Sense and Nonsense* history had become a succession of accidents for Merleau-Ponty; there was "at the same time the logic of history and the contingency of history" forcing us to substitute the idea of the "uncertainty of action" for that of historical necessity.[3] *Humanism and Terror* poses the question of the historical responsibility of the victims of the Stalinist purge trials in the light of this notion. The ambiguity of their historical acts could only be resolved in terms of their meaning for the proletariat. Actually, this does little in terms of settling the problem. Rather it complicates it further at a time when the proletariat itself no longer appears as the criterion and guarantor of meaning. The proletariat is overtaken by the problem of ambiguity.

It is precisely at this point in the polemic with Sartre that the phenomenon of the Party is introduced in *The Adventures of the Dialectic*. Like Merleau-Ponty, Sartre also talks of an ambiguity, but for him, however, it is not simply the mode of historical action; it is an ontological property of facts themselves. In the fact of this ambiguity of unorganized reality, the party, which for Merleau-Ponty succumbed to the ambiguity of action, becomes again, in so far as pure action is concerned, the instance capable of deciding, organizing the conferral of meaning. Thus, out of confusion there re-emerges a theory which escapes the question asked by Merleau-Ponty of whether the revolution

2. Calmann-Levy, 1975, re-edition U.G.E. ("10/18") 1979. pp. 7.
3. *Sense and Nonsense*, p. 242.

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"remains the same when it extends *ad infinitum*?" Sartre, then, reserves the moral dividend of the proletarian revolution for the Communists.[4]

This philosophical repositioning of Marxism in no way equips it to confront the deep, sociological transformation of the post-war period, or to rethink the forms of struggle. In the middle sixties, Marxism was forced to recognize a second, theoretical redeployment whose rigor met with no practical response except an unbelievable barrenness — that of the methodical destruction of a practical theory. Althusser admits in his *Self-Criticism* published in 1972 that his earlier writings were a trifle preoccupied with the class struggle as such. In this sense, the notion of "the class struggle in theory" introduced in 1967 is the first indication of a correction in his viewpoint. A perusal of the special issue of *Dialectiques* which came out in 1976 allows one to take the measure of the hopes raised by Althusserianism with its new conception of the mode of production and of the organization of struggles which aroused interest notably thanks to their association with the concepts of spheres of relative autonomy and of the ideological state apparatus. Either one or the other of these could be used to come to grips with the decisive importance of the state in the functioning of advanced capitalism, or with the vitally important role of science and technology in the management of modern modes of production and domination, and even of contradictions and protests which could not be related back unequivocally to the struggles of the traditional proletariat. In reality, one is now obliged to recognize that none of these potentialities have been realized and, above all, that they have had no influence on the new strategy of the communist movement. If one undertakes a methodological reconstitution of Althusser's reconstruction of historical materialism, one finds that it neutralizes the intervention of theory in practice *in nuce* by preventing it from taking sides in the organization of struggles "from below." This prophylaxis of theory is accomplished by the break between science and ideology, by the division of labor imposed on theoretical ideologies as opposed to practical ones, i.e., through the division between Philosophy and Science and, finally, by the notion of "the class struggle in theory" which follows from all of this.[5]

Jean-Marie Benoist, the future new philosopher, struck up a celebration of Althusserianism in a series of essays which he brought out under the title *Marx is Dead* immediately after May '68. He makes Althusserianism appear as the virtual suicide of historical materialism — at least in the eyes of those who see it as a theory of emancipation intervening in History. The leitmotif of Benoist's work is "What is your relation to Western metaphysics?"[6] And because Marx and his epigones belong to the field of Western metaphysics defined since the 18th century as synonymous with Reason and emancipation

4. *The Adventures of the Dialectic*, 1955, p. 182.

5. I have developed this reconstruction of Althusser's procedure in "*Ungleichzeitigkeit und Philosophie der Praxis-Zur Kritik der Philosophie Althussers*" in Schied-Korwarzik (eds.), *Grundlinien und Perspektiven einer Philosophie der Praxis, Kassler Philosophie Schriften* (1982), and in my book *Humanisation de la nature et naturalisation de l'homme*, (Klincksiek, 1982), pp. 95-112.

6. *Marx est mort*, Gallimard 1970, p. 65.

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in history, Marx's death signals the end of "a revolutionary teleology and eschatology which is organized around expectations of the reconquest of identity beyond a negativity which is lived as contradiction and dialectical opposition."[7] This ending is obviously greeted by Benoist with great satisfaction. Althusser, in any case, is praised for finally having read Marx the way one reads Plato and Parmenides, and for thus being part of the "structural revolution" that extinguishes the "mysticism" and "metaphysics" inherent in Marxism as a whole.The structural method followed by Althusser is clearly identified with the decompositon of the relation between theory and practice. What Benoist denounces under the names of teleology, eschatology, mysticism and metaphysics is none other, in fact, than the space for history; and, for a practical philosophy of history, the theoretical reconstructing of a mode of production as a totality seeking to organize the system of contradictions and, from there, the fields of struggles. It is the space for a theory which has transformation as its goal; it is the sense of history as process . . . it is history as such, which he seeks to deny. The rejection of the identity which is the non-dialectical presupposition of Marxism — when in fact this is simply the conservation of the historical possibility of reconstruction a totality in a manner irreducible to the demonstration of internal contradictions which break it down — represents the acceptance of decay without any reflection on the reflection, and suggests the renunciation of organization, and of change.

If modernity is the idea, born with the Enlightenment, of a fulfillment of Reason in history, then we have come here to a break with the idea of modernity itself.

*Some Characteristics of French Post-Modernism*

Throughout the seventies, post-modernist ideology was introduced at the end of an intellectual progression during which Reason in history picked up the tab for structuralism, for Lacanianism, for Foucault's archeology of knowledge, for the instant "isms" of '68, and for the denunciation of reason/power which was organized around the intellectual programs of Foucault, Deleuze, and Lyotard. Nietzsche and "libidinal economy" took the place of historical dialectics and political economy. History became once again just a story, and *Logos* gave way before *Mythos*. The categories they put into place — the production of desire, schizophrenia, decoding, deterritorialization — were elaborated into a philosophy of the end of history. The *Anti-Oedipus* of Deleuze and Guattari published in 1972 moved desire into the infra-structure. Schizophrenia becomes the form adopted by productive desire under mature capitalism: "Schizophrenia as a process is the production of desire, but such that it is a limit, the limit of social production determined by the conditions of capitalism. It is our privileged 'sickness,' the very sickness of modern man. The end of history has no other meaning but this."[8]

Schizophrenia characterizes modernity in its maturity. It corresponds to

7. *Ibid*, p. 246.
8. Deleuze and Guattari, *Captitalisme et schizophrenie*, Vol. 1, *L'Anti-oedipe.*

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the most extreme effect of the deterritorialization, or decoding, through which capitalist modernization is achieved. Capitalism imposes mobility, exchange and circulation as the successor to the codes which bind the individual to a social whole, and to a territory. In Lyotard's version of libidinal economy, truth is never more than an intensified desire for truthfulness, especially when it seeks to identify a revolutionary practice in history. Therefore, History is only a fable invented by this desire in order to provide itself with a space. Myth is restored its rights by the demasking of the logos, and the end of history. Against the pretense of universality claimed for the Logos and its taste for monotheism, Lyotard, in his *Instructions Paiennes*, celebrates polytheism and a "logic of Kairos," ready for hire.[9]

It is not possible here to enumerate the countless echos of these positions we have heard in France throughout the second half of the 1970s, as common to "the New Philosophers" as to the "New Right." At least for the thinkers of "the New Right," the unmistakable Nietzschean cast of the thought of Deleuze and Lyotard made it readily assimilable. Also, it was this Nietzschian twist which allowed them to be identified with the New Right's renewal and radicalization of the critique of modernity, even before the appearance of Lyotard's *La Condition Post-Moderne* in 1980 where they explicitly embrace post-modernism.

The "post-modern condition" renders null and void the belief in history as an emancipatory process. Marxism is irredeemably identified with the culture of modernity, and its succeeding theories, such as Habermas', still belong to the story of reason, because they still depend on two modern categories, legitimation and consensus, which today have lost all meaning. According to Lyotard, modernity defines itself by a "meta-narrative of legitimation" "As long as science refuses to be reduced to the enunciation of useful regularities, and continues to search for truths, it will be forced to legitimate its rules of the game. Now, when it insists on maintaining this discourse of legitimation in its own name, it ends up appealing to philosophy. One should agree to describe as 'modern' any science which refers to this meta-discourse in order to legitimize itself, which returns to this or that fable, such as the Dialectic of Mind, or the hermeneutic of meaning, or the emancipation of the rational subject or worker, or the development of wealth. For example, this is the case with the rule that consensus between the sender and receiver of an utterance represents a truth value. It is held to be acceptable since this rule can be inserted back into the perspective of a possible unanimity between rational minds. This is a version of the Enlightenment fable according to which the heros of knowledge work toward a good, ethical-political end, such as universal peace. One sees by this example that the legitimation of a knowledge by a meta-story which refers to a philosophy of history, leads one to call into question the validity of the institutions which regulate social relations: they too cry out for legitimation . . . " (p. 7).

It is certainly no accident that Anglo-Saxon pragmatism finds an echo and a

9. (Instructions Paiennes; U.G.E., 1977).

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translation in Lyotard's post-modernism. Language games seem to be both an obligatory phase of modernity, and the necessary precondition for eventually recovering its project. Modernity began with a critique of metaphysics during the Enlightenment that established the legitimate rights of instrumental reason without abandoning the problematic of its ultimate foundation. If we are to believe Nietzsche, it fulfills itself with the collapse of the backward worlds. This collapse will be consummated precisely by the Vienna Circle and Wittgenstein: by the critique of metaphysics and of philosophy as one language game among others, and like them dependent on ordinary language. Since that time, it has been futile to seek to produce out of the work of this language game any legislative instance — Reason or Philosophy — because it is a vicious circle. It needed nearly a century for the consequences of this critique to penetrate social philosophy, and post-modernity is perhaps the sign that only now has a degree of social modernization occurred sufficient to give it its full meaning. Habermas is basically accused of attempting a reformulation in the language of pragmatism of a logic of legitimation which is futile because it still depends on an appeal to reason.

In fact, this is a misunderstanding which Habermas' latest work *Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns* (1981) should dissipate. It would be more correct to say that he is attempting to reconstitute a communicative rationality on the basis of ordinary language — a rationality which cannot exist except as it is realized through discussion. This takes into account the Vienna Circle's epistemological break and leads to an inversion of perspective which seems important because it is undoubtedly the only one capable of restoring the project of modernity, and of reconstituting a consensus between the discourse of everyday life and technical discourse. This change in perspective is totally absent from the propositions advanced by Lyotard, who holds to the conviction that historical narrative is in crisis; and to a belief in "the atomisation of the social into supple networks of language games" (p. 34). The consensus Habermas seeks to obtain through discussion constrains this "heterogeneity of language-games" (p. 8).

On closer inspection, the picture which Lyotard paints of post-modern society has little about it that is new: the dominant class is that of *decision-makers*; information is controlled by experts, etc. On the one hand, he insists on the "agonistic dimension," the loose game of purely pragmatic relations (p. 33), while on the other, he specifies that certain classes of utterances predominate in established institutions. This is the case, for example, in business enterprises, the educational system, and in research; all institutions where the performance principle is the criterion of legitimacy. Here "bureaucratization is the outer limit of this tendency" (p. 34). Post-modernity seems to inaugurate an era of generalized agonistic combats, but the persistence of the discursive games characteristic of the dominant rationality confronts Lyotard with counter-evidence which is stubbornly rooted in experience and which threatens to reduce to nothing the sphere open to the post-modern desire for free play and complexity.

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The free play of language acts is supposed to guarantee the widest possible kind of democracy, but the continued presence of instrumental and technocratic forms of rationality means that strategic language games never cease to place pious hope in jeopardy. Lyotard is finally forced to admit a disquieting alternative that "the computerization of society could become the ideal instrument for control and regulation of the market system, now expanded to include knowledge itself, and ordered exclusively by the performance principle. It inevitably contains the possibility for terror. It could also aid working policy groups in their search for meta-prescriptions by giving them the information they most often lack in order to make reasoned decisons. The line to follow in order to make things bifurcate in this last direction is, in principle, very simple: the public right of free access to computer memory files and information banks" (p. 107). As Habermas observes correctly at the end of his *Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns*: "the technical evolution of the electronic media need not necessarily result in the centralization of communication networks," but this does not change the fact that "video-pluralism and *television democracy* are a priori nothing more than anarchist visions."[10] More exactly, one can still find room between terror and total democracy for differing degrees of pluralist illusion through which liberalism can perpetuate the old society, and avoid recognizing the unmanageable complexity which imposes limits on the fancies of technocratic reason.

Out of this development of French thought into post-modernism, I shall retain two major themes: *the end of reason, and the dissociation of social relations*. The decomposition of the social fabric is hardly deniable. It is rooted in the forces of production; generated by the retreat of traditional technologies and the decline of the industries tied to them. Entire regions lose the economic identity which structured them; unemployment destroys the role of work as the mainstay of social identity and, above all, it destroys the illusion of a divided society reconciled with itself by brutally revealing its inequalities (the vulnerabilities of women, of youth and of white collar workers). Economists and sociologists could lengthen the list of indicators of this decomposition without much effort. Taken together, the economic crisis and the of the forces of production which we have now entered, complete the evolution already begun under liberal capitalism and which never stopped under advanced capitalism. Although the development of liberal capitalism eroded traditional systems of motivation, it always continued to rely on norms generated by society for its support. Bourgeois public opinion, whose universalist ideology claims to express the general interest, and capitalist society to an even greater degree, live as parasites on the reserves of pre-capitalist traditions. In particular, Habermas points out the that professional ethics of the middle class, oriented toward the value of performance, needs the support of religious traditions just as much as does the fatalism of the lower classes. The protestant ethic appears in the secularized professional ethics of

10. *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns,* (Suhrkamp, 1981), Vol. 2, p. 575.

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the bourgeois and in the traditional morality of work among the lower ranks. Now, however, "elements of images drawn from the traditional world which represented the context and complement of bourgeois ideology have been weakened, and are unrelentingly broken down over the course of the development of capitalism.[11]

Drawing on Max Weber, Habermas relates this weakening of tradition to the increasing rationalization of life-worlds which were formerly regulated in a traditional manner; to the scientization of professional practice, to the expansion of the social service sector, and to the administrative and juridical conquest of political and social relations which were previously informally regulated. In conjunction with these developments, there appears what is conventionally called the marginalization of religion and philosophy. The bourgeoisie's utilitarian self-interest no longer defines itself by reference to rational natural rights; religion ceases to constitute a value system guiding private ethics — the codes disappear in the sense which Deleuze meant when he spoke of decoding.[12] At the diagnostic level, Deleuze's, Lyotard's and Habermas' overall interpretations relate — just as they all are related back to Bell's analysis of post-modern sociology in *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (1973). Beyond the weakening of the "traditional stuffing," as Habermas once put it, the constitutive elements of bourgeois ideology which support the social consensus are gradually sapped. The ideology of performance, according to which individual initiative will allow individuals to fulfill themselves, progressively loses its credibility both in economic competition and professional success, because of the non-synchronous development of the systems of work and education. Born out of the mobilization of a work force torn from the land, capitalism fulfills itself in a generalized de-localization and a "symbolic de-structuration." According to de Certeau, "In the past, it was the Church which organized a ground, that is, a constituted land."[13] In *Le capital et son double*, Guillaume contrasts traditional symbolic society with contemporary society in these terms: traditional society is characterized by "numerous symbolic significations associated with a social practice. Such significations are general and, in traditional society, are connected with all other social practices and representations. Kinship structures, festivals, religious ceremonies, funeral rites are strictly ordered, and form symbolic systems. Capitalist development is incompatible with these limits. The symbolic systems which regulated work and exchange were directly incompatible with industrialization, and the development of the forces of production. The necessity to mobilize the work force was also in contradiction with the symbols of the rural habitat, with nature, and the rootedness of men. The symbols which maintain the cohesion of diverse collectivities by representing them, by marking the place of each within them, have today almost disappeared. Society is threatened with anomie."[14]

11. (Cf. Habermas, *Legitimationsprobleme in Spatkapitalismus*, (Suhrkamp, 1973).
12. On Deleuze, see V. Descombes, *Le même et l'autre*, (Minuit, 1979, p. 205.
13. Michel de Certeau, "La faiblesse de croire," in *Esprit*, April-May 1977, p. 231.
14. M. Guillaume, *Le capital et son double*, (P.U.F., 1975), pp. 22-24.

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One could also speak, with Weber and Habermas, of a differentiation and "complexification" of the unity of the traditional life-world — an increasing complexity which today has attained a state of generalized decomposition. In a parallel manner, as Guillaume demonstrates, the relation to objects suggests an "axiomatic of market flows" which delocalizes need in favor of desire.

It is possible that this picture of the post-modern completion of modernity might need correction because of the slow-down of economic growth. Maybe delocalization is braked by the resurgence of need, which would bring about a reanchoring of the forms of traditional economy, (self-sufficiency, odd jobs), that depart from the rationality of the market place.[15] It is possible that the counter-cultures, and the "neo-populist" movements (the return of religion, the rediscovery of nature, the ecological movement, provincialism, etc.) may constitute the embryos of what Habermas called "a new communicative ethic" which could once again create motives.[16] And this is possible despite these movements' nostalgia for the traditional life-world, and despite the truth of Deleuze's suggestion that they reveal the effects of a "schizophrenic capitalism" in their defensive retreat into particularity, autonomy, and autarchy. If Habermas is right, then crisis will become once again a moment of decision in the full sense of the word. One more reason, then, not to close oneself within notions of decomposition, as it appears the post-moderns have done: one more reason to try to transform the rupture into a turning point. Every time it has been conceptualized, modernity was seen as the expression of a crisis. This is as true for Weber as for Baudelaire. In this sense, the category of modernity appeared as the "coming into awareness" of the dysfunctionalities of modernization.

In this perspective, the end of reason, the second major theme of post-modernism, is undoubtedly nothing other than the end of a particular form of reason: the end of which instrumental reason that carried out the process of modernization and which is simply the reductive fulfillment of the modern rationality born in the Enlightenment era: the latest result of a "dialectic of Reason."

*Beyond Post-Modernity: Modernity Unfulfilled*

To take only two examples, the challenge of the new technology, on the one hand, and the challenge of the Third World on the other, are ample proof of the fact that modernity remains unfulfilled and needs to be completed. Without succumbing to an exaggerated optimism, it seems that both of these challenges directly imply issues that condition possible solutions to the crisis,[17] and if one rises to the challenge, they presuppose the transformation of capitalist rationality and the recreation of consensus. The Third World,

15. The concept of the dualistic economy developed in the 1970s corresponds to this evolution and answers the growth of a subterranean economy. On the dual economy, "Retour du religieux et rationalité technocratique," in *Lumière et vie,* No. 148, 1980). See also the paradox of "creative unemployment" (Illich), and Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful*, (Seuil, 1978).

16. Habermas, *Raison et legitimité*, (Payot, 1978), p. 126.

17. Michel Albert, *Le pari français* (Seuil, 1982), pp. 27-28 and 31.

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where the sudden emergence of the newly industrialized countries has put our old industries at a competitive disadvantage with growth rates that have been twice as rapid as the developed economies during the past twenty-five years, (5% as against 2.5%, according to the *Inter-Future Report*), is not simply the last refuge for the ideals of modernity and of modernization. Its modernization is linked to our unfulfilled modernity. During the 1920s and 1930s at the time of another modernity, (or another crisis of modernity), Spengler deplored the speed with which the West transmitted its technology to the colored peoples.[18] Whereas the relation of most conservatives to technology was not uniformly negative, the *Kulturpessimist* was worried by the world-wide extension of modernity. This world-wide extension, already inevitable, is not simply the enlarging of an imperialist space, the opening of new markets, and the export of our social contradictions. It also creates new situations which make for an objective solidarity between the West and the Third World that radically modifies imperialism and colonialism, and leads to the recasting of modernity as a new rationality which no longer need be identical with forms of domination.

To transform reason, and break with a process of modernization that appears to fulfill itself with the desocialization of consensus, one must face up to the task of the formation of a collective will. This collective will for transformation must replace the "feudalized" public sphere in which the existence of consensus depends on the ability of the interventionist state to assure its legitimacy through the distribution of goods and services. The new technologies seem to offer the opportunity for this reformation of will. Electronics and microcomputers represent, after the second industrial revolution of electronics, a third revolution which effects the manufacturing of products and the provision of services. Whereas the steam engine and electricity multiplied the number of new production processes, the third industrial revolution will change primarily the organization of production. According to existing estimates, it is preparing the way for "both an explosion of productivity and an 'implosion' of employment."[19] This provokes mostly concentrated on mechanical competition with human intelligence. Albert claims that "the solution will come through computerization." New machines will only eliminate jobs if we live in countries incapable of becoming producers of computerization — countries which fail to win the export battle to supplement imports. Seen this way, the problem of the new technologies will always be none other than the "n" event in the competitive race between different elements of technical capitalism. But this new modernization requires change in the managerial rationality of business firms and, one a change does not go without the other — "a collective desire, and a feeling of legitimacy from the start" — because one cannot" computerize society by decree."[20]

18. G. Merlio, quoted in Dupeux, " 'Révolution conservatrice'et modernité" in *Revue d'allemagne*, Strasbourg, January-March 1982, p. 15.

19. Albert, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

20. See Michel Crozier, *On ne gouverne pas la société par décret*, (Grasset, 1979).

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Above all, this is true if the desire for change and the feeling of legitimacy is hostage to the question of unemployment — the deficit of rationality that puts into question the legitimacy of managerial power most directly. This option can only be exercised through the democratization of the enterprise, and by democracy: "We need a kind of self-managed modernization. At *Leroy-Sommer* the strategy of modernization of the workshops is decided in an informal but collective manner."[21]

In the perspective created by the challenge of new investment, the challenge of education, the questioning of the organization of work, and of life around work, a new consensus and a resocialization is necessary. Albert shows that, in order to permit necessary investments in new factories and advanced capital equipment, two major problems must be overcome: the burden of social benefit payments and the upward spiral of the wage scale. In contrast with the neo-Keynesian policy usually followed by Left governments up till now, the French Socialist government feels that it must slow the rise of total wages and incomes, and moderate the generosity of welfare-state programs. However, this does not imply that it is enough to simply exchange total wages and incomes, and moderate the generosity of welfare-state programs. However, this does not imply that it is enough to simply exchange Keynesianism for monetarism. In addition to the managerial inadequacy of these policies, (what Habermas calls their "deficit of rationality"), their failure to understand the current challenge arises from the fact that "monetarists and Keynesians reason as though the application of their policies required no support from society at large. In either problematic, the economic agents are presumed to behave like Pavlov's dog. With Keynes, they are offered a carrot, and with Friedman they get simply the stick. In both perspectives, the general population can be indifferent to what government policy is attempting to do for it. The Keynesian voluntarists think it is enough that the State intervene to correct the natural swings of the market mechanism in a rational manner. The monetarists think that it is better to leave things alone. Either way, both schools place their faith in the institutional mechanism; in the first case, in the name of *raison d'etat*; in the second by virtue of market laws."[22] In both these economic perspectives, legitimacy is the product of the expansion of economc rationality. In fact, it may be that increase of productive investment requires an expansion of legitimacy to precede expanded rationality. This veritable reversal of the usual procedure implies that one will not necessarily end up with the same kind of rationality at the end of this process as one started out with. From now on, rationality must be mediated by the consensus of society as a whole.

There is also the challenge of education: "Each time a robot replaces a worker in the factory it means that the principle of 'idiot work' is superseded by that of the intelligent, semi-skilled worker."[23] Whereas modernization has

21. Albert, *op. cit.*, p. 152.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 150.

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up until now spread Tayloristic methods and multiplied the number of unskilled jobs, computerization paradoxically requires that skills be upgraded: "The management of robotized workshops is so complex that the technicians cannot keep track of everything. It is necessary that the ordinary workers think as well, and that their opinions be heard." In the past, several weeks sufficed to train a worker. Now general education and the diffusion of a technical culture has become the keystone of the system.[24] Technology ceases to appear as a strange and alienating reality and becomes instead the foundation of social culture. This new relation to knowledge, and to technical subcultures contributes to establishing the conditions necessary for the formation of a collective *Bildung*. The expansion of social democracy now conditions the possibilities for economic progress. Taylorism is radically questioned since the ordinary worker must be given his say in decisions. (We all know about the efficiency of Japanese quality circles).[25] Legitimacy and rationality have now become inseparable. The frontier between economic organizations and their social environment, between the world of work and the discipline of the firm, and social life outside, has become less rigid.

*For a Modern Socialism*

As we heard from the detractors of modernity, consensus is the modern problematic. If this is so, then socialism must become modern. We were told, after Nietzsche, that socialism *is* a modern idea. It is indeed. At least in the sense that it is inextricably tied to the ideology of progress and technical modernization which it lays claim to while protesting against the notion that the dysfunctionalities of modernization can be rationalized. The Soviets plus electrification. Now for Marxism the rationalization of modernization means bringing the process back under social control. Socialism should be the resocialization of modernity. Socialism may belong to modernity, but the latter has undergone the effects of the dialectic of the public sphere, which is at one and the same time an effect of the dialectic of reason, an effect of its reduction to instrumental and technocratic levels of understanding, and of the development of a relatively autonomous political superstructure, which from the time of the constitutional bourgeois state to that of the bureaucratic state has created the conditions for the exercise of instrumental and technocratic forms of management. Socialism is precisely the side of modern reason that has gone unfulfilled. The failure of modernity by no means signifies the futility of socialism, but rather makes it the precondition for relaunching a project of modernity which remains to be completed. When I say that socialism must become modern, what I mean is that it must rediscover the project of modernity, hidden beneath economic conditions which modernity itself has imposed on it, and which the post-moderns have confused with its self-betrayal. The economic possibilities already discussed seem to indicate that this is a concrete possibility rather than simply a pious wish for a pure

24. Thierry Gaudin, "Culture technique et créativité sociale," in *Esprit (La gauche pour faire quoi?)*, October-November, 1981, p. 218.

25. Albert, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

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moral duty.

Some obstacles stand in the way of the recreation of consensus. First of all: "Central authority has been strong and legitimate when it presented itself as the embodiment of a grand ideal: modernization, which comes first in the sense of the modernization of morals (secularization) and afterwards in the sense of economic and technical development. These represent changes which on more than one occasion were imposed by force on certain parts of society stuck in their old ways. Contemporary society has already passed through these changes."[26] State power thus finds itself in a crisis which is both latent and permanent. It confronts both a crisis of legitimacy and a crisis of rationality. But at the same time, as Guillaume shows, delocalization grows out of "the desire for the state."[27] The first reef which the Left must avoid is that of a quest for legitimacy which obeys this logic of desire: a desire to which it is predisposed not only by the constitution of the Fifth Republic, but also by its own traditions of social statism. This has been described as "a political culture, dominant on the Left, whose practices and representation converge on the image of a center for society and for social change which always turns out, in fact, to be the state."[28] The mode of popular representation is an obstacle to the reactivation of a real political public sphere, especially in presidential system where the administration enjoys an absolute parliamentary majority for the first part of the president's seven year term. The nationalizations, for example, have a double edged quality as symbols of change. They threaten to reinforce by themselves the logic of an interventionist, managerial state.

In this kind of situation, the role of the symbolic cult is now just as important as it was at the time of the inaugural ceremonies of the new President at the Pantheon. It would be mistaken to interpret these simply as another form of the State-as-Theatre. Rather, they operated as the invocation of a tradition which could provide legitimacy as such, through a flight backward that takes the place of a quest for a new legitimacy based on the construction of a future oriented consensus organized around the resocialization of control. At its very worst, the cult of symbols represents a new opium of the people whose effects are intensified by prestige deficits from the preceding Giscard administration, (Grandeur suits political authorities as much as it does religions). Socialism has never severed its umbilical cord with religion, indeed its secularism functions as a kind of inverted religion. It is always tempted by the possibility of finding in secularism religious values which are missing from managerial rationality.

The magnificent unanimity of opinion of May 10 was only a temporary crystallization. It would be a mistake to forget this, and interpret something which was partly electoral and partly due to a deep sociological change (Marx's collective worker turning against the capitalist managerial state) as

26. Paul Thibaud, in *Esprit*, October-November, 1981, p. 273.
27. Guillaume, *Le capital et son double*, *op. cit.*, p. 131.
28. Patrick Viveret and Pierre Rosanvallon, *Pour une nouvelle culture politique*, (Seuil, 1977), p. 33.

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being a social whole — as a society which has been reconciled with itself. The strategic question of organization has not gone away, and it is only be responding to this question that a consensus worthy of the name will be constituted. In contrast to the dominant modality of consensus which only give us a pseudo-consensus, both unfree and manipulated, a new political culture is needed which will develop a totalizing strategy that takes differences as its starting point. This strategy must be a totalizing one because the new rationality — a non-reductive rationality — can no longer tolerate a purely dualistic mode of existence which juxtaposes technocratic rationality and traditional symbols. This dualistic mode vainly seeks to secure values useful for legitimacy only to see them escape it because "there is no such thing as the administrative production of meaning."[29] Taken from the starting point of differences, one must, in effect, renounce the totalization of political cultures, of economic conditions, or social realities from a viewpoint which privileges a category in time-space, or geography (the Plan, the State). The great risk is that "the Crisis," will hide the crises (crises of motivation, of values, of the decomposition of the social body); that it will lead one more time to the privileging of an economistic[30] and instrumental approach, (this is one of the dangers involved in a politics that seeks to "apply a program"[31]). The opportunity for change might be missed again, at the very moment when the "Crisis" has created the factual conditions for a new division of labor, and for a new behaviorial attitude toward the distribution of wealth — when it has created, in a word, the conditions for a "change in life": "The reduction of unemployment, the development of activity outside the workplace, and changes in work itself, should mutually reinforce one another. Indeed, they already appear to do so. Work sharing increases the importance of free-time activity by reducing the length of the working day. Leisure-time activities contribute to the reduction of the number of people actively looking for work. In addition, the experience of autonomous leisure-time activity makes degraded working conditions intolerable to workers. They will refuse to be treated as simple line operators while on the job and demand the transformation of work itself. This new social-economic balance presupposes a new arrangement of social space. Local collectivities must play a decisive role in planning if we are to leave behind us the current dominant bi-polarity: place of business/personal residence . . . ."[32]

These are outlines of a possible process of resocialization: a process to which the current de-centralization reforms of the Socialist Government could make a big contribution if they turn out to be something more than an administrative measure (or, what is worse, simply a political maneuver). In any case, the decomposed social fabric, already identified by post-modern

29. Habermas, *Raison et legitimité*, *op. cit.*, p. 101.
30. Robert Fraisse, in *Esprit*, October-November 1981, p. 113.
31. J. C. Eslin and O. Mongin, "Hors programme," in *Esprit*, October-November 1981, p. 10.
32. Guy Roustag, "Travail et mode de vie," in *Esprit*, October-November 1981, p. 248.

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thought, imposes a new logic on us which must favor particularity over totality. By no means does this require that one give up the attempt to totalize, but only that one cannot make this attempt while taking the existing concept of the state as one's foundation — even if the state claims to have become a class state. The Marxist fundamentalism of such a strategy is completely out of place in a situation where social de-composition leaves no space open for a polarization around a central contradiction which, as in *The Communist Manifesto*, opposes two classes against one another. Habermas makes us aware in his latest work that, on the contrary, there is a common ancestry which is shared between the present-day protest movements and the non-contemporary revolts of the last century.[33] The orthodox conception runs up against enormous difficulty in attempting the impossible, the determination of axes which can unify them. The paradox is that in the end a truly modern socialism must become post-modern, because post-modernity provides the condition from which all real projects of modernity can be taken up again.

If we wish to take up on our own the theme of unfulfilled modernity, it cannot be by closing our eyes to the "post-modern" condition, nor by forgetting the technological impasse in order to propagandize around the theme of renewed economic growth through new technology. It is in the name of the redeployment of modernization that the challenge of the new technologies must be met: both because they create an opportunity as well as a challenge to it which cannot be answered except through the reactivation of consensus. The flight forward embodied in the technological challenge must become an issue implying the change of society and the change of rationality. Left thought cannot continue to tack between the purely verbal discourse of socialist fundamentalism, as much symbolic as technical, on one hand, and a post-modernism, on the other, which takes itself for the "Great Break," and refuses to understand the decomposition of society dialectically. There is an urgent need for a reflexion on "post-modernity" as the dialectical crisis of modernity — modernity as a missed opportunity which, paradoxically, the current crisis is helping us to rediscover. We are in search for a new point of cohesion between social and instrumental projects.

The post-modern agony of Marxism and the task of creating a new consensus come together. The duty of socialist thought today is to render dialectical these two contradictory phenomena in order to recreate a practical theory which corresponds to the emergencies of our time. Undoubtedly, the task which thought must carry forward is a reflection on the dialectic of modernity which can displace the current Necrology of Reason.

33. *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns, op. cit.*, p. 577.

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# STATE AND SOCIAL FORCES IN SOCIALIST FRANCE

by Alain Touraine

In France, matters of State are always more important than those of society. Each historical period seems to reinforce this predominance of the State in a new way. For centuries, the State has been traditionalist and integrationist, imposing its unity on provinces living culturally as well as economically mostly a local or regional life. Then, after the upheavals of the French Revolution, it became a middle-class State, both economically conservative and politically and ideologically progressive, emphatically anticlerical and agressively anti-labor. Finally, in the 20th century, under the Fourth as well as the Fifth Republic, the State promoted industrialization, but remained quite suspicious of too speculative a capitalism and of technicians or innovators who had not studied in its most prestigious Schools.

Consequently, French history has been mostly centered on the upper rather than the lower classes. Confronted with monarchical, imperial or republican princes, it knew the revolutionary days and listened to the intellectuals' voices rather than responding to the unions' pressure or giving initiative to intermediate powers. This pattern of historical initiative may be of importance in periods of rupture, whether it be a matter of breaking off from the past or springing towards the future. In both cases, the elites, whether at the top of the State or fighting against it, turn events into a symbol. For nearly two centuries, France has been the country of revolutions and for the past century, the country where intellectuals' voices have been raised most strongly against the State in the defense of liberties. During less epic periods, the domination of the state tends to degenerate into an alliance between a conceited bureaucracy and an empty ideology protecting vested interests. The more "civil" countries have had contrasts as strong as these in the context of a vigorous grassroots democracy or corruption uncovered by Muckrackers. On the contrary, France knows neither widespread corruption nor active local democracy.

Presently, the State is both epic and petty bourgeois. The State is epic for the two following reasons. When he came to power, Mitterrand emphasized that his presidency should mark a significant break with the past. Later on, his main advisers easily convinced him that during his presidency, France should leap forward, master new technologies (particularly electronics) just as it had already succeeded in mastering the nuclear industry and to a certain extent spatial exploration. The philosophy of the Enlightenment comes alive once again: we must develop science, technology and the forces of production to move forwards. Because the French feel increasingly overrun by foreign (especially Japanese) products, they are easily convinced by their State of the necessity of a national effort. Earlier they had put the same trust in d'Estaing and Barre, whom they now resent for having disappointed them. But at the same time, this is a petty bourgeois State. It protects the rising of an increasingly important new wage-earning middle-class backed by powerful unions — unlike working-class unionism which remains weak and divided. Everywhere new elites are being elected. They are mostly teachers, civil servants and social workers while, on the other hand, the importance of doctors, lawyers and industrialists is decreasing. These new "Republicans,"

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who prefer to call themselves Socialists, are both modernizers and conservatives, just like their ancestors of the Second and Third Republic. They are open to new social and cultural demands but are above all eager to defend their own interests. They are libertarians who constantly appeal to the State for help and protection. They are more concerned with politics and ideology than with the economy and cultural creativity. They want to be revolutionaries at all costs and are even likely to talk about the working-class, even though they have almost no contact with it, since unlike in Social-Democratic countries there are very few Socialist-elected representatives who come from the working class.

These middle-classes feel revolutionary when they seek to expand their own power at the expense of University or medical "mandarins" or to destroy the supposed power of banks. After Mitterrand's victory, the small world of the top civil servants was very excited. If the country remained quiet, the State was making the revolution — at least in the ministries. Young militant advisers were proclaiming that May 10, 1981, France had moved into the next century, and those who had not understood this would be swept away by history. This enthusiasm even reached one of the most important ministers who was in charge of the social security system.[1] She declared that her role was not to count, but to change society. Yet when the social security coffers were empty, she had to be dismissed. The petty bourgeois' triumph lasted exactly one year. Unfortunately, the Left came to power in the midst of a national and international crisis, when unemployment was too high and investment too low. Consequently, the coffers emptied out while public opinion began worrying about the new leaders' excessive power — particularly in the media. After a short period of hesitation, this interlude — a period that may remind people of the 1849 verbal exaggerations and political disorders — ended on June 4, 1982. The "Colbertist" industrializers came back to power — at last as far as economic policy is concerned. The revolutionary petty bourgeois were allowed to spread out in secondary sectors such as social services, health, research and education for a little while longer. Basic education, however, remains unaltered, for it has been controlled and paralyzed for a long time by unions resolutely opposed to any change except to revive the old war against Catholic schools.

Since the middle of 1982, "realism" has prevailed over what some have called utopia, but was actually ideology or even rhetoric. So, the State finds itself in its favorite position, giving a simplified and grandiose image of the history it confronts: "industrialize or die." But in doing so, it cuts itself off from public opinion. The old middle and liberal-popular classes (farmers, craftsmen, small farm managers), are hostile to this government elected by wage-earners and defending their interests. Workers are disappointed by a regime that has not reduced unemployment nor raised wages. Professionals and modernizing executives are worried about disorganization in big business, lack of initiative, and mediocracy. As for the salaried middle-classes, the government must persuade them to bear most of its financial efforts. Yet, they will remain loyal to the State, for they are conscious of the fact that a right-wing government would rob them of their newly acquired dominant political position. Although the government registered a substantial loss in the last municipal election, it does not matter much: parliamentary elections will not take place until 1986. If the Left is receding, the Right has not gained. Right-wing liberals have fallen into disrepute and Chirac frightens professionals and modernizing executives. Thus their distrust of political authoritarianism, and consequent shift to the left, helped bring Mitterrand to power.

1. Nicole Questiaux, from the C.E.R.E.S. faction, was dismissed from office in June 1982 and replaced by Pierre Bérégovoy.

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Presently, public opinion is supporting the government's efforts to stabilize the economy. The freeze on wages and prices has been well-received and Delors' "austerity" has been accepted by the majority. Yet, the end of the "give-away" policy, the call to new efforts, the lack of a foreseeable economic recovery in the short run will place the government in a difficult situation. Even if it can concentrate its efforts on its comprehensive industrial project in 1983 and 1984, afterwards, especially with the approach of the parliamentary elections, the government will find itself in the minority. As for the Socialist party, some of the modernizing executives are deserting its ranks, while part of the working-class electorate is abstaining rather than shifting to the Socialist camp. Given these conditions, the government can choose one of the two following strategies. The first one is strictly political. It consists in moving closer to a certain part of the political Center, such as seeking a compromise with small business. There will be many anxious to support Mitterrand in order to help him break from a communist alliance that cannot last more than one 7-year term. If the 1986 elections mark a move towards the Center-Left, the 1988 presidential elections could mean the definitive collapse of the Communist Party. This political strategy corresponds to an old tradition: France is governed by the Center. Its main disadvantage is to form an alliance between old and new petty bourgeoisies — a goal hardly compatible with upholding a policy of industrialization. Nevertheless, Mitterrand, who understands French political life, might be forced to make that choice in order to avoid a severe political crisis. Furthermore, most of the social measures adopted at the beginning of his 7-year term would be accepted by his new allies — even if they reject his nationalization program.

The other strategy is more social than political. It consists in looking for the support of the agents of modernization who are a powerful category in a country that has grown accustomed to living on an international scale and, like most European countries, has recently known vigorous industrial development. Clearly, this strategy corresponds to the majority's wishes: economic realism, business efficiency, more social equality, answers to new cultural demands and social relations, internationalism. This set of themes corresponds to what some have called the Second Left, of which Michel Rocard remains the most popular representative — even though he currently lacks governmental power.

From the present government's viewpoint, which is much more political than social, the first strategy has every chance of succeeding. But it may mean a break with modernization agents and lead France towards "Southern" countries. The triumph of this political strategy would reinforce the domination of politics and ideology over economy and culture: the Third World political pattern. If France is seen to be unable, by itself, to enter post-industrial society, such an ideological post-industrialization is to be preferred. But if French society is seen as already part of the developed European countries capable of holding their own in competition with Japan and the U.S., than one must choose an economically and culturally modernizing, realist and democratic policy. If political conditions lead towards the other strategy, it is clear that this one can only be chosen if its supporters are capable of political action. It is here that social movements and schools of thought must be taken into consideration.

Nowadays, social movements are very weak. The legacy of May 1968 has almost disappeared. The "anti-Gaullism" has been appeased by the Left's victory and the new "old-left," after having imposed its doctrinarian sectarism in universities until about 1975, has been on the decline ever since. The failure of the 1976 student strike marked the end of "Gauchisme." The new old Left that stubbornly prepares the 1905 revolu-

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tion, only exists in the memory of a few teachers. Other "streams" of protest remain active, but they have the utmost trouble unifying. Protest groups oppose government policies in the name of local interests, cultural traditions or libertarian ideas. These groups achieved some importance during the first half of d'Estaing's presidency when Corsicans, Bretons and Occitans fought against the centralized State, environmentalists and ecologists against the nuclear program, women against opposition to birth control and abortion: all fought important battles that were sometimes even fiercer here than in Germany or in the U.S. But from 1976-1977 on, all these struggles have been losing momentum because the image of a motivated and almighty State has been destroyed by the crisis. Nowadays, the population willingly accepts the State to lead the fight against the crisis. This involves a growing acceptance of the nuclear industry, the weakening and disorganization of regional movements and, for other reasons, the end of the large feminist campaigns once important reforms were passed thanks to Simone Weil and the Left's support. While these protest movements are growing into an autonomous political expression in Germany, in France they are weakened by the confidence of the French in their State as an instrument of defence of their national interests strengthened by international competition.

Furthermore, the Socialist government's reforms meeting some of the social movements' demands, have resulted in the cooptation of social militants by the State's institutions. Women's organizations are being financed by the Ministry of Woman's Rights, and the administrative reform has granted to regional interests much more than regional movements could have gained by their own efforts. And although the Socialist government has kept most of the former government's nuclear policy, it has created an important agency for energy control in which many ecological militants and union members are entrusted with important responsibilities. The weakened protest movements occasionally claim that they have been betrayed by the government, but most often they rely on it. Today, the heirs of the movements of the seventies within the State are allies of potential social protests rather than the principal agents of these protests. As for working-class unionism, it is also weakened. Their weakening mainly affects the Confédération Générale du Travail (C.G.T.), whose tight bonds with the Communist Party seem increasingly strained — especially since the invasion of Afghanistan and the destruction of Solidarity in Poland. But the weakening of trade-unionism has a more general cause: workers know that major decisions are made at the government level, and that trade-unions, the C.G.T. as well as the C.F.D.T. (Confération Française et Démocratique du Travail) are weakened by their willingness to support the government. Particularly in the regions most affected by the economic crisis, it is obvious to everyone that trade-unions have no real impact on decisions that will determine the future of a region and that only a directly political pressure can have some effect.

Then, where does social unrest come from? It is no longer created by ideological movements, conveyed by utopias born at the end of the expansion period. The main conflict is no longer between those in power and those who oppose it, but between two kinds of shifts to post-industrial society, from the top, led by the State and ideologies, or from the bottom, controlled by the modernizing categories under the pressure of new social demands, but also backed by intellectuals opposed to State omnipotence, and particularly hostile to the ideology-based State.

The modernizing current is composed of the "internationalists": they struggle to belong to a set of countries entering post-industrial society through their own efforts. They favor information over energy, communication over production, complexity

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over standards, invention over discipline. They want to have a complete and quick access to modern technology, and distrust the nationalistic call to protectionism. They willingly vote for the Left, by disgust for shopkeepers and financiers, but feel a strong dislike for the Communists' methods and objectives. This numerous category includes managers, engineers, scientists, doctors, technicians, researchers, who retained the most innovating aspects from the 1968 movement. They are neither the elite, nor the people. Contrary to bureaucrats eager for guarantees and influence, they are "professionals" confident of their usefulness and consequently more concerned with changes than with protections, with creativity than with ideological justifications.

Can this modernizing category fuse with popular categories, and support their demands? Hardly, but the success of the Socialists, i.e., or the political Left, lies in this union. This indicates the importance of the C.F.D.T. which, for a long time, has sought to defend these popular demands, in accordance with this modernizing action. In the past few years, the C.F.D.T. has grown conscious of the fact that this alliance would not take place spontaneously as it used to think after 1968. It has been led by the events of Afghanistan and Poland and in response to the Communist presence in the government, to accord a growing importance to the themes of democracy and liberties, both closely linked to the theme of the unity of a society threatened by a break between protected and unprotected sectors. In opposition to the political Left, backed mainly by the protected sector, the Second Left aims at uniting agents of change and the unprotected workers. Such an alliance appears paradoxical, for the modernizing professionals are over-protected inasmuch as they are the actors of change and naturally fear being pulled down by the weight of unprotected sectors. But the C.F.D.T. and others as well, are doing their utmost to convince them that the struggle against the "dual," two-speed society is an essential condition of overall modernization and therefore of the success of their efforts. Fighting against unemployment, job-sharing, even if it means a wage-reduction for relatively well-off categories: these are the basic objectives. They must be associated with realistic economic policy, and particularly with an unleashing of creative potential which feels crushed in the big industrial, administrative and university organizations, both by the weight of old rules and by the growing influence of new petty bourgeois bureaucrats, who care more about their own security and interests, than about modernization. To a great extent, intellectuals are inclined to support this economic, social and cultural Left, against the political and ideological Left, because they hate an absolutist State with political power, economic initiative and ideological influence, and because, above all, they are now, as they have always been, the supporters of social forces against the State. But they only intervene when social opposition is organized and it is a question of its being recognized and consequently of opening the way for its penetration into the cultural field. This is precisely what is going on today in Germany and to a certain extent in the U.S. This situation prevailed in France in 1968, but not today. It certainly explains French intellectuals' apparent silence.

Today, the autonomy enjoyed by social forces with respect to the State and to the political system remains very limited. France behaves as if it were a company, hit by unemployment, threatened by foreign competition and at the same time enlarging its workers' rights of expression. Social movements need to maintain a greater distance from power, a situation rarely found in France nowadays, where everyone believes he is responsible. France is still dominated by the problem of its difficult entry into post-industrial society. She is not yet able to cope with the problems of this society or, more generally, to give social and cultural movements the free, uncontrolled space

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they need to develop. Fifteen years ago, French society resembled a university; today, it is more like a high school, with its good and bad pupils, but all of whom are subject to the same beliefs and standards. Furthermore, the seriousness of urgent economic concerns does not encourage reflection and critical action. Some are worried about their personal fate; others care especially about maintaining their fringe benefits. As surveys have shown, most French believe things are going badly with others and rather well with themselves. As a typical French saying goes: "On se défend" (we get along). This has been the situation since 1976, and will continue until 1986.

During this ten-year period, two leftist currents have equal power. For some, we need to industrialize, and only economic success will make the formation of new social movements possible. Within the government, this conception is particularly espoused by Attali; but I also share this view. For others, we need to adjust to stagnation and recession. In Germany, until recently, management of the crisis seemed to be going relatively well, and, at the same time, the political system had no opening to the Left. The end product of this double situation was an extra-political, social and cultural opposition. In France, on the other hand, the awareness of the country's inadequate industrialization has been on the rise, while at the same time, the political field has been opening up since the rebirth of the Socialist Party. This explains the strength of independent social movements in Germany and their weakness in France. The situation in this country will only change when we admit that the motto of industrialization does not entail the expected consequences because it does not penetrate into the reality of economic and social life: because the best plans sink in a mixture of bureaucracy and the will to please one's electorate.

The real French problem is not to choose between socialism and capitalism, but to choose between a State-led or a civilian process of post-industrialization. This country is firmly committed in the former process, the Statist one, but we can expect its crisis. When will we be in a position to change roads? The very day that Socialist Party politics will no longer be guided only by its strategic alliance with the Communist Party. The union of the Left strategy that proved to be the only one capable of bringing the Left to power has at the same time implied an "abstract" and inefficient kind of public policy. Consequently, it implies a self-paralyzing program laden with ideology and bureaucracy, one, however, far-removed from the real conditions of cultural creation, economic initiative and technical efficiency. The French Left is torn between two different logics. The civil logic which is supported by public opinion, and the State logic that made the 1981 victory possible. It is inevitable that the latter prevails over the former. It is only when the weaknesses of the Statist way are recognized that the Socialist Party, in its search for other social and political allies in addition to the Communists, will have to become more civil minded, i.e., both economically more realistic and socially more open-minded.

From 1981 to 1983, progress has already been made in this direction. But after it has surpassed a late social democracy, the government must still acknowledge the vanity of an industrializing voluntarism that does not improve the real creativity of the productive apparatus, because it remains at the level of large strategic manoeuvres, rather than at the level of the daily striving for efficiency. But this political reversal will not be at all possible as long as the Socialist Party depends on an alliance with just the Communist Party. Mitterrand's seven-year presidency will really mark the modernization of French society only if the Communist Party is no more the Socialist Party's indispensable ally in 1986 and 1988, only if Socialists recognize that they need the Second Left's support as much as that of the Communist Party, or even more. Thus, we can assume

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that political strategy will control social action for some years yet.

Meanwhile, France will go on being gloomy, uncertain of its future, sometimes tempted to bring the right-wing back to power — but the Right is far from having transformed itself, and from recovering its credibility and, in any case, far from knowing great cultural innovations and active social movements. These ten years have involved little cultural creativity, social monotony, political passivity. Those who oppose the shift to a Thatcherian right-wing type government will do their utmost to awaken this sleeping society, to shake off empty ideologies, to get rid of the growing corporatism and to push the country toward a more open-minded democracy, with less State control, and associated with the development of cultural and social initiatives. But at the present time, this return to a more "civil" Left needs at least a half success of the present government's policy. Should this policy fail, France would probably swing into a deeper social and cultural archaism of which the last years of d'Estaing's government have already given us a bitter foretaste. In France, new social movements will only develop to the extent that this country undertakes a realistic and efficient overall modernization, trusting in its own strength and initiative. This situation is still remote, but the present policy, despite its considerable weaknesses, is bringing us closer to it than the policy wished by the big bourgeoisie or by the Communist Party's authoritarian State-management. In 1968, France was upset by social movements. Nowadays, her main concern is survival. She will remain bound by this concern for some years yet, but if she begins to recover, she might experience a new cultural creativity and new social and cultural conflicts.

# ALL IS CALM*

## by Pierre Birnbaum

A particularly differentiated and institutionalized type of State developed in France throughout its history. Its strength rests both on the imposing bureaucratic machine it knew how to build, as well as on the distance it was able to keep from different social peripheries, diverse interest groups, and local influences. Faced with this type of State, the French workers movement since the end of the nineteenth century has adopted either a strategy of self-organization outside the State or a strategy of occupying and utilizing this same State according to its particular interests.

These two great tendencies run through contemporary French social and political history. From Proudhon to anarcho-syndicalism, the workers movement has attempted to organize itself through mutual-benefit societies, cooperatives, and similar types of specific associations. It aspires toward autonomy and distrusts the State from which it expects nothing. From Pelloutier to direct-action syndicalism, from the creation of the Bourses du Travail to the Charte d'Amiens, the workers movement wished to ignore the State's ponderous tutelage. In contrast, at the end of the nineteenth century there appeared a synthesis between Jacobinism and Marxism which favored taking command of the State, believing it could be utilized in favor of social change. From

*Translated by Marie-Hélène and Frank Adler.

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Jean Jaurès to Jules Guesde, despite profound differences, there was agreement on an identical instrumental conception of the State. Mitterrand was the first to attempt to make the State function in this way by modifying its action; the parties of the Left occupied the State during the Popular Front, and then, after the Liberation, already utilized a policy of voluntary nationalization.

In relation to these two "cultures," the Socialist Party, founded at the Congrès d'Epinay, appeared particularly desirous of returning to the self-management project developed at the same time by the C.F.D.T.; it drew its inspiration from the ideas of 1968, rejecting rigid models, authority, and the State. It wanted to make itself the voice of the need for change, the demand of multiple social movements which at that time were engaged in processes of partial liberation: the ecological movement, feminism, homosexual groups, those who supported student rights, and those who rejected incarceration. To its left, the newspaper *Libération* embodied these tendencies and expressed this sensitivity which seemed to exert a rather strong influence within a Socialist Party drawn to "*l'expérientation sociale*," trusting mobilization, and appearing to reject the old professionalism which came from a party system modelled by a strongly structured State. Henceforth, change would come from civil society.

To the contrary, however, Mitterrand's following seemed desirous of assuring the predominance of the republican State, while the CERES resolutely clung to classical Marxism in terms of social classes and the conquest of the State. At this time, and before the switch of alliances which allowed Mitterrand to limit the weight of Rocard by thereafter leaning on the CERES, the party declared (at the 1977 Congress of Nantes) that its "originality" resided above all in the adoption of a self-management perspective. The fifteen theses on self-management were adopted and integrated into the Socialist Party's doctrine. To "change life," it was therefore indispensable to change social relations and not simply conquer State power.

As early as 1978, in his brilliant pamphlet "Modeste contribution aux discours et cérémonies officielles du dixième anniversaire," Régis Debray criticized the ideas of May 1968 which had "liquidated Lenin," *Libération*, and the "French cultural and political avant-garde which has become the American caboose." Debray severely attacked the advocates of social experimentation who thought they could "change life without changing the State." For him, this "de facto alliance between certain intellectual groups derived from May and *la grande bourgeoisie financière* made for the ultimate consolidation of bourgeois hegemony." Expressed at that time outside the Socialist Party, this view ultimately became part of that Party's outlook after May 1981, when it gained control of the State apparatus.

After May 1981, the French socialist movement adapted itself to the logic of the State it has just conquered. It rapidly abandoned self-management ideology. From that time, socialism would realize itself through State action. Social mobilization seemed to bloom little by little; a few satisfactions were accorded to women, homosexuals, students, and prisoners. Each time the State transformed legislation in a direction that was more favorable to them, thus attesting to the legitimacy of their demands.

This never transformed the State apparatus; it rather reinforced State domination over social life. During the Gaullist period, the parties, associations and movements of the Left combatted a State which incessantly reinforced itself, but on which they had very little influence. During Giscard's period, on the contrary, the Left wanted to preserve a welfare State attacked by triumphant liberalism. Today, they have conquered not the State itself, but have at least succeeded in dominating the quasi-totality of political power through the electoral game. Even if the Left parties occupy the summits

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of the State apparatus, that apparatus will continue to escape them. High functionaries all kept their jobs secured meritocratically and occasionally seem to slow down the execution of decisions. Now, with an inner-logic which protects its institutionalization, the State always acts like a formidably organized machine. It did not become socialist.

The Ministries were practically unmodified; the Ministry of Finance, in particular, kept its immense power. If a Ministry of Solidarity were created, this was done chiefly to better administer the fiscal crisis by securing the loyalty of the citizens. Let us note also that there was the creation of inconsequential structures meant to satisfy the demands of old social movements (for women, consumers, etc.). The social movements themselves disappeared. Some of the leaders of the feminist movement, of past student struggles, of struggles for more equitable justice, a less selective and more democratic education, and a less repressive police force subsequently became integrated among the new political personnel. Having become deputies or cabinet members, the leaders of these critical collective movements did not escape the logic of their new authority roles — a function of the place attributed to them within the State. Their departure seems to have contributed to the devitalization of these movements which were once so active.

The Communist Party which participates in State power wants to be responsible and competent, as during the Liberation period, showing itself now as then respectful of the State. During this period of austerity, which it accepts with difficulty, it declares — just as it did in 1945 — that one must know now to "roll up one's sleeves." As for the extreme Left, it seems as if it had never existed — judging from the strength and suddenness of its disappearance; the long marches with flamboyant red banners, the quasi-militaristic actions, as well as the joyous festivals organized at Pantin or in the Parisian suburbs are but remote memories. Former Maoists have rediscovered religion and the Trotskyist mole seems to have abandoned his subterranean work. As the recent film *Mourir à trente ans* shows, for the old combattants themselves the social struggle is definitely over. Disillusioned with Marxism and bored with Parisian delights, many intellectuals have belatedly discovered the merits of an "open society" and the joys of systemic analysis with its retroactive satisfaction.

Alone stands Edmond Maire, true to himself, who remains far from the State apparatus and does not hesitate to frequently make his opinion known. As early as 1981, he provoked a mini-crisis by affirming that "today the govenment is stalling on the electoral promises it had made . . . I utter a cry of anger. Careful, things have begun to go sour." One year later, November 9, 1982, he repeated, "A fraction of those who were most eager for change are already breaking with the government." In reality, however, no demonstration of serious discontent has yet taken place on the part of the working class. On the contrary, it is the small businessmen who have been mobilizing themselves and taking to the streets opposing socialism and . . . big capital. It is Wagner that one hears nowadays in the streets of Paris.

No broadly-based social movement disturbs everyday life. As Jean Poperen, number two in the Socialist Party declared September 9, 1982, "the government addresses France, governs for France. We socialist militants must address those who want the success of the socialists, those who can be won over to this cause, and we must organize them for action." The government governs, and the party organizes action. One finds oneself very far from self-management utopias and collective mobilization. Shying away from an appeal for "popular mobilization," the Socialist Party's executive committee on September 14, 1982, wished only "to win popular adherence to the govern-

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ment's economic policy." According to the most recent polls, popular support seems to be declining dangerously while the socialist government pursues its courageous struggle for a re-examination of profound social inequalities. And the wave of adherents to the party itself which occupies power never seemed to have been very important. One no longer sees in the streets of Paris massive gatherings of people, workers' marches, joyfully frolicking homosexuals. Except for a few terrorist attacks, linked more to foreign policy, all is calm. We are witnessing a return to the State, to a presidential regime, to nationalizations, to the power of the upper-echelon bureaucrats. The governmental functionaries guard their function, and the Ministers have no difficulty preserving their centralized structures. A return to the "old soldier" party, loyal and simple, to the transmission belt, to the State nuclear power plants so criticized in the past. Instead of self-management, the Auroux report favors workers' rights without giving them, however, what their counterparts across the Rhine already have. In the same vein, decentralization was primarily intended to reinforce the power of local notables, not citizens participation in the management of local affairs, the party and not the role of local associations and groups. With the failure of the district election, decentralization will chiefly serve to increase the influence of the parties of the Right. There, again, what has become of the G.A.M. (*Groupes d'Action Municipales*) of yesteryear? One has, after all, neither transformed society nor the State. All is calm. The privileged relations between the Communist Party and CGT favor new labor agreements, for example, at the Parisian Metro or the French Railways and serve perhaps to limit the magnitude of strikes. The State and its parties direct society not toward socialism, an expression which seems to have almost disappeared from the political vocabulary, but — in this period of economic crisis — toward a social well-being accompanied by a greater freedom of expression and a better respect for the rights of citizens and immigrants through real juridical reforms.

One must admit that the militants are very tired. Since the end of the fifties, present every week, every month, in the streets of Paris they marched and marched. Repeatedly they screamed their indignation and their hopes —against the Algerian war, Gaullism's rise to power, the dangers of a military coup, all forms of repression against the workers' movement, the immigrant workers or the independence of the university; against the burial of culture, the war in Vietnam, Budapest and Prague. Thousands of times this generation had paced the traditional routes in Paris from la Nation or from la Bastille to la République, or, more rarely, from la Bastille to la Nation — or yet, sadly, from la République or elsewhere, to the cemetary Père Lachaise. Who will express the symbolism of these multiple routes? This generation has known the violence of police repression, the "divine surprise," certainly, of May 1968. It met with so many deceptions, it encountered so many dead-ends with the Great Helmsman and third world experiences. This generation is wary, and calm becomes it. It returns to private life, family, or community, roots; it abandons the public sphere to political professionals who know how to activate the political, administrative, syndical, or yet university machines in the name of the State, the *patrie*, the Republic, science and progress — to political professionals who invest their passions in their new authority roles.

The unemployed have difficulties finding jobs. Workers, employees, and executives hold on to theirs. The dreamers, those whom imagination mobilizes, turn away from collective action, disengage themselves to finally pursue their private interests before it is too late . . . time passes and life is almost over. As A. Hirschman would say: from engagement to deception, when will the beginning of a new cycle occur?

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# FRENCH-STYLE SOCIALISM*

## by Claude Lefort

A single question appears to dominate all others right now, and the answer which will be soon given to it in terms of facts should determine the fate of the regime in place and of the economic plan implemented last June by the government: will Delors' initiative succeed or fail? Will the end of the price freeze be fatal to it? Will the rate of inflation become appreciably lower, will unemployment at least be stopped in its growth, will investments start again, will the concertation between the State and the social partners at last be effectively instituted? On the Right and on the Left, many do not hesitate to make the best or the worst projections, and willingly speak the language of legitimacy. The Opposition, at least in its most aggressive faction, sees Mitterrand's legitimacy as disintegrating and calls upon the Socialists to demonstrate it in the next elections if they do not want to incur popular anger. The Majority, with good reason, invokes the Constitution to say that its actions are time-related and cannot be sanctioned before the end of the presidential mandate. But beyond this quarrel, both sides agree on the following point: the foundation of legitimacy is in the economy. What distinguishes the commentators who try to be objective is that, for them, the decisive question raised above is accompanied by two corollaries. First, have the socialists exchanged an ideological mode of thought for a realistic one? In other words, have their "dreams" (by which one means their ideology) yielded to reality? Or, are they improvising with more or less skill, in response to unforeseen circumstances, a new project without understanding that it implies sacrificing the doctrine? Second, if one takes into account the discordance between the governmental action and the accompanying discourse, which remains resolutely optimistic and obstinately denies and change orientation, and whose function is supposedly to retard disappointment among socialist militants, will this result in destroying the eagerly pursued confidence of small and big investors?

We are among those few who are not satisfied with these types of questions. It is impossible, of course, to deny that the stakes of the Delors plan are considerable and that, generally, the economic imperatives are becoming more and more constraining in France (although, of course, governmental effectiveness can always be measured by its capacity to face this kind of situation). It is no less impossible, we think, to discern the properly political dimension of the situation and not to look for what, in the present uncertainties, is ascribable to the equivocal nature of "French-style socialism." Our leaders, we are told, let themselves be carried away by their dreams, during the 12 months which followed Mitterrand's victory, until they discovered the resistances of reality. This is a strange way of combining economics and psychology. It all happens as if the arguing of the experts was only possible through a fictional detour: The Socialist Party is turned into the hero of a novel, a hero who would have to be educated by various trials and tribulations. It would be better to pay attention to the physiognomy of an astonishingly complex socio-political formation whose heterogeneity makes it

* Translated by Robert D'Amico and Cecile Moulé.

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unique. It would be better to wonder if the difficulties that it encounters are not as much the result of its internal contradictions as its collision with supposed reality.

In this respect, the "first period" of governmental action is much more instructive than it is suggested. Spectacular measures were adopted, dictated no doubt by the desire, not of breaking with the spirit of capitalism, but at least of inaugurating a rupture with it. Were the socialists dreaming? At the very least we can call attention to the signs of their lack of preparation (forgetting about the status of the foreign subsidiaries of nationalized companies, placing a whimsical evaluation of the work tools in the tax on wealth). In any case, these measures were derived from a socialist conception, or rather from the "transition toward socialism" well anchored in the thinking of the leadership and of a number of party militants. These measures had been discussed in long debates, which forbids attributing them to imprudence or ignorance of reality. Mitterrand, Mauroy, and Chevènement knew, like Rocard, that it suffices to possess 51% of the capital of an enterprise to control its direction. If they did not listen to the objections of Rocard, it is because they wished to initiate a transformation of society, because in their minds, this transformation was linked to a change in ownership relations and because the latter had to result from the increase of state functions both as State-entrepeneur and State as banker. If we can talk about the errors of socialist power it is not in terms of inattention to the functioning of the economic system. The socialists claimed to change this system or to lay down the conditions for change and its postulates were strictly economic.

The Socialists wrongly believed that they would profit from the support of a vast popular movement and that the ideas of the State-entrepeneur and the "transition toward socialism" (their key propaganda theme) would rouse the enthusiasm of the crowds. This vast movement which the socialists have never ceased wishing for and that Mitterrand invoked one year ago in his Strasbourg address has in fact been lacking since the victory against the Right, a victory which remained electoral. In spite of Mauroy's tour of France, the support failed to materialize. Therefore, we ought to reproach the socialists not for their incompetence (even if there are indications of it) but for the project of setting up a model of society imported from vulgar Marxism which, deprived in addition of the means of revolutionary violence, and fortunately, proved to be aberrant. We must reproach them for having invented a mobilization of the masses to push back the "class enemy." These two reproaches are really only one because the defect of the project was confusedly perceived by the very masses it was supposed to fuel with enthusiasm. The majority of those who vote for the Left or who, without giving it their votes, are sensitive to its demands for change, have little interest in the transition toward socialism. For many, socialism is the symbol of democratic and liberal aspirations. But set up in a system established in opposition to capitalism — a system in which good state power would assume control over a social life abandoned to the conflicts of private interest — it has a good chance to arouse more distrust than attraction.

Still, we cannot examine the first measures which are imputed to ideology (at the top of which are nationalization) without mentioning the choice which determined the composition of the government. A political choice, if there was one — and which endures in spite of what they call the new orientation. With the passing of time, the dream argument disappears. Shortly after a victory which gave it the absolute majority in the Assembly, the Socialist Party resolved to share political authority with the Communists. There was, however, no lack of arguments or pretexts for breaking an alliance chaining it to a party which tried to ruin the Union of the Left and showed itself to be, in

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its organization as in its policy, a ceaselessly totalitarian formation. Let us not go back to the origins of this alliance since it has always been unnatural. We will only mention that on one occasion where the electoral defeat of the Communist Party was capable of precipitating a crisis in its leadership, the Socialist Party, far from making use of this crisis, worked hard at setting the Communist leadership back on their feet by entering into a governmental pact with them. Since this disqualifies the arguments formerly used so often to justify this policy, namely that the socialist Party had no chance of winning without the co-operation of the Communists, we must conclude that, inside French Socialism, there is a unnatural combination between democratic and anti-democratic inspirations.

Moreover, since there has recently been much talk about the establishment of a new relationship to reality, which the new economic strategy demonstrates, we could ask what is this relationship, when reality is seen as the Polish events, namely the crushing of unions by a communist power that the Communist Party does not repudiate. Or, again, when it is seen with regard to the contracts which link France and the Soviet Union, making France dependent on the big totalitarian power for its supply of natural gas. These two events show to what lengths ideology and "realism" support one another. The distinction between *raison d'Etat* and morality, or between politics and economy, was exploited simultaneously to elude the problem of totalitarianism and to save the alliance with the Communist Party.

It is sufficient to invoke the positions taken by the CFDT, which constitutes a pole of socialist sensibility outside the Party, to become aware that attitudes on economic, social and political problems and on domestic and international affairs closely depend on one another and that it is impossible to isolate the strategy dealing with unemployment, inflation and currency. The CFDT does not believe in the virtues of nationalization if it is not accompanied by change in the mode of management of businesses. The CFDT links the reduction of work time to the extension of employment and accepts therefore the idea of a decline in wages. On this last problem as well as that of participation of civil servants in the financing of a solidarity tax the demagoguery of PC and PS is evident. The CFDT takes the lead in the protest movement against repression in Poland and does not like the government's prudence. Its opposition to totalitarianism is clear. Under the name of socialism, the CFDT seems to seek the means of starting a democratic process in all areas of social life, and notably the dissemination of the procedures of information, discussion and consultation which would permit the intervention of the largest number of people in political affairs. It is obvious that this type of sensibility collides with the statist ideology and with the authoritarian behavior demonstrated by a large part of the socialist leadership.

We would be wrong, however, to only discern the marks of ideology in socialist policy. The "first period" still points out, and this we tend to forget when we place it under the sign of ignorance and resistance to reality, that the desire to have the transition toward socialism is also combined with a remarkable opportunism. We have seen the concessions multiply in favor of any group powerful enough to defend its interests. On the one hand, the government worked hard to please the social strata in which it finds its best support (thus, the civil servants have been exempted from the solidarity tax: an excellent demonstration of realism). On the other hand, each corporation which mobilized for the defense of its privileges has received some help. As Rosanvallon wrote in an illuminating study in this issue of *Telos*, one of the most disquieting traits of socialist policy is "social-corporatism," that is to say, a new social policy which

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is different from the traditional formula of clientism, attached to the Right, and from the global compromise between the State, workers and employers that characterizes social-democracy. It is a "bastard combination" of both, a "punctual administration of real constraints and of legitimate demands" without a comprehensive perspective, and the consequence of this is to engender a "spiral of compensation and to inflate "the state controlled part of the social dynamic." Nothing permits us to say that such a tendency has been definitely reversed by the Delors' plan, although it is momentarily thwarted. How would it have developed if it were not for the joining together within the Socialist Party of the neo-Marxist ideology just described and of the empiricism of a strata of petty and high politicians whose first priority is maintaining the conditions of their power by paying back those who support them and by treating well those who risk being mobilized by their adversaries?

To be more precise, let us add the socialist leadership's devotion to the heritage of an old nationalist tradition, to those special corporations constituted by the army and the police. The Minister of the Interior immediately after taking his post, multiplied favors for the police, even if that meant opposing those groups which hoped for liberal reforms. Likewise the Minister of Defense favors the Army even if that entails forgetting about the promised debate over nuclear arms.

One will not end marvelling at the amalgam which took place under the authority of Mitterrand between currents and aspirations not only diverse but contradictory. French socialism is not only heterogeneous but unusual. It carries a pseudo-revolutionary dogmatism (at its limits permeable to totalitarianism) which co-exists with a technocratic authoritarianism, a political liberalism, an imaginative reformism, a new sensitivity to democratic demands, and an opportunism in the service of the destruction and conservation of positions. And everything holds together, until now, thanks to the skill and prestige of a man who arbitrates, decides and whom no one knows for sure where he stands.

If we cannot put these tendencies on the same level, however, it is because the conquest of power, and this has to be repeated, was accomplished through the project of transition toward socialism, from a rupture between the old and the new and because everyone accepted the alliance with the Communists and submitted himself to its imperatives. We can certainly forsee that the test of truth will not be evaded forever. Whether this test occurs because of an external event (the Communists are pursuing, with different methods and procedures, a war in Poland and in Afghanistan, which will have repercussions) or because of an internal one (the communist double game is practiced with limits that they cannot exceed), it is to be feared that it will happen too late because they did not give themselves the means, while it was still time, to dismantle the machinery of a totalitarian group. The Socialists could be the last to reap the benefits from a divorce which apparently will be imposed upon them.

In considering only the present situation, we wonder if the Socialists can really benefit from the possible success of their economic plan since its implications are contrary to their initial project. The difficulty is not only in re-establishing confidence, in the sense meant by economists. It is doubtful that the Left can lower its policy to the level of economic administration, even if the latter is guided by a laudable concern for effectiveness. The future of the socialist power does not depend only on abandoning its doctrine. It had to exhibit a spirit of inventiveness, to give a shape to democracy, to inject a breath of fresh air into public life. What we can perceive from its history and its present physiognomy does not give much hope. Yet, we still cling to this hope, so strong is our repulsion before the prospect of the restoration of the Right.

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# THE QUESTION OF SOCIAL-CORPORATISM*

## by Pierre Rosanvallon

Government by "corporatism," or "social corporatization," is on the rise. There seems to be a diffuse interconnection that would make sense of a diverse series of facts and decisions: non-payment of unemployment compensation tax by civil servants, partial fuel tax reduction for truckers (total for taxi drivers), retrocession of various sectoral advantages for employers, etc. Group strategies are developing and the lawn of the Matignon Hotel has become the emblematic spot where these groups post their successes.

It is hard to see what is going on exactly so long as one speaks of corporatism in general. What is globally called corporatism in fact breaks apart into phenomena quite different in nature, scope, and origin. To try to untangle the knots, we must refine previous analyses and distinguish among what I will call the "four forms of social corporatization." Let's briefly examine them.

1) Let us first discuss *Malthusian forms of coporatism*. Essentially these are corporatist forms inherited from the debris of traditional social structures that remain encysted in the modern industrial world. Examples: those professions protected by old unrevised laws (limitation of pharmaceutical dispensaries; quota systems in flour mills); trades closed and self-administered by a professional organization (dockers, the proofreaders and workers in the book industry). The Rueff-Armand report, published in the early sixties, drew up an impressive list of all these obstacles to the modernization of the economy and society. These are corporatisms in the literal and original sense of the word. The critique of these Malthusian forms of corporatism leads implicitly to a positive and progressive assessment of the virtues of the free market society (mobility, individualism, freedom of association) and the free market economy (competition, open systems). This is an assessment in which politics and economics cannot be separated — whence arises its ambiguity — an assessment of the opposition between the old (the pair: corporate body-privilege) and the new (the pair: market-democracy). Market society against corporate society, class trade unions against trade guilds, industrial capitalism against *rentier* capitalism: such is, in effect, the credo of "modernity."

2) *Corporatisms of retreat* are of a different nature. They are not holdovers from the past but new creations. They arise as a specific defense mechanism for social groups in a context of crisis. They are corporatisms in some way brought about by the increasing segmentation of the economy and the society in a period of slow growth. This segmentation is not in itself a new phenomenon, but it had previously been hidden by the dynamism of the period growth. The slowdown in growth, tied to new forms of managing labor power, engenders new phenomena of social fracturing. Corporatisms of retreat correspond in this sense to a crisis in large organized structures of collective defense and promotion (the Keynesian welfare state and collective bargaining). Here we have social groups seeking to conquer or defend "corporatively" what can no longer be conquered or defended globally. The entire system of differences and dis-

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parities in the salaried population becomes exacerbated and freezes into a juxtaposition of localized egotisms. This is the system that seeks to protect acquired advantages in the most limited sense.

As by-products of crisis, expressing a new mode of demand for social protection, corporatisms of retreat also translate into a crisis in class consciousness. More exactly, they show how fragile class consciousness is and how dependent it is on an expanding economy. To this extent, they express the current crisis of unions, in their current form of class-based trade unions (instrument of production and unification of the working class): that is, their tendency to be primarily preoccupied with their members and not with the whole of the working class, their difficulty in articulating the different demands of unprotected vs. protected workers, etc.).

Their obsolescence does not so much refer one back to a vision of what modernity means (as in the case of Malthusian corporatisms) as to the necessity of defining what the CFDT calls "new solidarities." But if nothing is done in this direction, these corporatisms of retreat will naturally be transformed into new strata of Malthusian corporatisms, producing the same effects.

3) It is from this somewhat different perspective that we must understand *pressure corporatisms* in French society. They define themselves by traditional "lobbying" behavior in the political system and they naturally become more developed as legislation and regulation increasingly interfere in the economy. These pressure corporatisms emanate essentially from economic groups seeking to obtain special fiscal or regulatory advantages. They are not a novelty and are neither more nor less active than previously. They are emblematic of the contradiction of a system in which the most zealous defenders of the free market constantly conspire to limit the effects of this market on their own sector. In this battle, the characteristic rhetoric generally consists in passing off specific advantages and special protections as the condition for the re-establishment of "true competition." It was to re-establish a fair competition between rail and highway that truckers asked for a fuel tax reduction; it is to compensate for the effects of an "unfair competition practice" from abroad that certain professions are demanding protectionist measures.

4) *Social-corporatism* is of yet another order. It must first be understood from the viewpoint of power. It defines the mode of government of a society founded on a multiplication of bilateral arrangements and partial and sectoral compromises between the State and social groups, the State and groups with economic interests. This type of corporatism defines first and foremost a new *political form of social management*. It is different from both the model of constituent-based politics and the social-democratic model, the two distinct historic forms of non-authoritarian administration of modern democracies. These two models have their own constraints and characteristics. In the constituent-based model, society is managed like a "political market": power seeks to secure the loyalty of its voters and to gain new ones by granting specific advantages (cf. what the Fifth Republic did for more than 20 years with respect to farmers). This is a model of the Right, for it is easier to make it work with non-salaried groups whose interests can be easily circumscribed and identified. For the Left, which essentially leans on salaried groups, this model is more difficult to manage, notably because of the difficulty in delineating that geometric space known as "the middle classes."

The social-democratic model, the political form of the Left, rests on a *global* compromise between the State, the working class, and the employers. It is tied to the existence of class-based parties (social-democratic parties remain working-class parties) and to class and mass unionization. The slowdown in growth and the splits within the work-

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ing class are making this model more fragile everywhere it has been dominant (which accounts for certain electoral losses of the Social Democrats in Europe).

*Social-corporatism* must be understood in this context. It is a bastardized combination of constituent-based strategies and watered-down social democracy that today characterizes the Left's political form of social management. It is the combination of a legacy (constituent-based politics) and a project for crisis (social democracy). It corresponds to a form of piecemeal management of real constraints and legitimate demands without any development of direct, global, and transversal forms of arbitration. Because of this, there naturally arises a *compensation spiral* (for example, social advantages are accorded to salaried workers; business is then later compensated for the cost of these advantages), which gradually accelerates the State sale of the social dynamic. Indeed, the logic of compensation is not a zero-sum game (that is, you give with one hand what you have already taken back with the other), but rather a negative-sum game: above and beyond other perverse effects of this dynamic, there is always a negative balance to offset (from which arises the problem of budgetary and social deficits, the great dumping ground of this logic).

But social-corporatism does correspond to a real problem: how to manage particular interests — which multiply in a crisis situation — within a framework of necessarily standardizing legislation. To transcend social-corporatism then — at high financial cost and uncertain electoral benefit — we must find a new way to manage the problem of particular interests and simultaneously work to define the conditions for new global forms of social compromise.

The problem facing us today is not so much Malthusian corporatism or pressure corporatism (these have always existed with more or less force), but rather corporatisms of retreat and social-corporatism, and these are beginning to have politically and socially destructive effects.

# STRUCTURALISM AND POST-STRUCTURALISM: AN INTERVIEW WITH MICHEL FOUCAULT*

## by Gérard Raulet

RAULET: How should we begin? I have had two questions in mind. First, what is the origin of this global term, "post-structuralism"?

FOUCAULT: First, none of the protagonists in the structuralist movement — and none of those who, willingly or otherwise, were dubbed structuralists — knew very clearly what it was all about. Certainly, those who were applying structural methods in very precise disciplines such as linguistics and comparative mythology knew what was structuralism, but as soon as one strayed from these very precise disciplines, nobody knew exactly what it was. I am not sure how interesting it would be to attempt a redefinition of what was known, at the time, as structuralism. It would be interesting,

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though, to study formal thought and the different kinds of formalism that ran through Western culture during the 20th century. When we consider the extraordinary destiny of formalism in painting or formal research in music, or the importance of formalism in the analysis of folklore and legend, in architecture, or its application to theoretical thought, it is clear that formalism in general has probably been one of the strongest and at the same time one of the most varied currents in 20th century Europe. And it is worth pointing out that formalism has very often been associated with political situations and even political movements. It would certainly be worth examining more closely the relation of Russian formalism to the Russian Revolution. The role of formalist art and formalist thought at the beginning of the 20th century, their ideological value, their links with different political movements — all of this would be very interesting. I am struck by how far the structuralist movement in France and Western Europe during the sixties echoed the efforts of certain Eastern countries — notably Czechoslovakia — to free themselves of dogmatic Marxism. and towards the mid-fifties and early sixties, while countries like Czechoslovakia were seeing a renaissance of the old tradition of pre-war European formalism, we also witnessed the birth in Western Europe of what was known as structuralism — which is to say, I suppose, a new modality of this formalist thought and investigation. That is how I would situate the structuralist phenomenon: by relocating it within the broad current of formal thought.

RAULET: In Western Europe, Germany was particularly inclined to conceive the student movement, which began earlier there than it did in France (from '64 or '65, there was definite agitation in the universities), in terms of Critical Theory.

FOUCAULT: Yes.

RAULET: Clearly, there is no necessary relation between Critical Theory and the student movement. If anything, the student movement instrumentalized Critical Theory, or made use of it. In the same way, there is not direct connection either between structuralism and '68.

FOUCAULT: That is correct.

RAULET: But were you not saying, in a way, that structuralism was a necessary preamble?

FOUCAULT: No. There is nothing necessary in this order of ideas. But to put it very, very crudely, formalist culture, thought and art in the first third of the 20th century were generally associated with Left political movements — or critiques — and even with certain revolutionary instance; and Marxism concealed all that. It was fiercely critical of formalism in art and theory, most clearly from the 30s onwards. Thirty years later, you saw people in certain Eastern bloc countries and even in France beginning to unsettle Marxist dogmatism with types of analysis obviously inspired by formalism. What happened in France in 1968, and in other countries as well, is at once extremely interesting and highly ambiguous — and interesting because of its ambiguity. It is a case of movements which, very often, have endowed themselves with a strong reference to Marxism and which, at the same time, have insisted on a violent critique *vis-à-vis* the dogmatic Marxism of parties and institutions. Indeed, the range of interplay between a certain kind of non-Marxist thinking and these Marxist references was the space in which the student movements developed — movements that sometimes carried revolutionary Marxist discourse to the height of exaggeration, but which were often inspired at the same time by an anti-dogmatic violence that ran counter to this type of discourse.

RAULET: An anti-dogmatic violence in search of references . . .

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FOUCAULT: And looking for them, on occasion, in an exasperated dogmatism.
RAULET: Via Freud or via structuralism.
FOUCAULT: Correct. So, once again, I would like to reassess the history of formalism and relocate this minor structuralist episode in France — relatively short, with diffuse forms — within the larger phenomenon of formalism in 20th century, as important in its way as romanticism or even positivism was during the 19th century.
RAULET: We will return later to positivism. For now, I want to follow the thread of this French evolution which you are almost retracing: a thread of references (both very dogmatic and inspired by a will to anti-dogmatism) to Marx, Freud and structuralism, in the hope of discovering in people like Lacan a figure who would put an end to syncretism and would manage to unify all these strands. This approach, moreover, drew a magisterial response from Lacan to the students at Vincennes, running roughly as follows: "You want to combine Marx and Freud. Psychoanalysis can teach you that you are looking for a master; and you will have this master"[1] — an extremely violent kind of disengagement from this attempt at a combination. I read in Vincent Descombes' book, *Le même et l'autre*, with which you are no doubt familiar . . .
FOUCAULT: No. I know it exists but I have not read it.
RAULET: . . . that fundamentally, it was necessary to wait until 1972 in order to emerge from this vain effort to combine Marxism and Freudianism; and that is emergence was achieved by Deleuze and Guattari, who came from the Lacanian school. Somewhere, I took the liberty of writing that we had certainly emerged from this fruitless attempt at a combination, but in a way that Hegel would have criticized. In other words, we went in pursuit of the third man — Nietzsche — to bring him into the site of the impossible synthesis, referring to him rather than to the impossible combination of Marx and Freud. In any case, according to Descombes, it seems that this tendency to resort to Nietzsche began in 1972. What do you think?
FOUCAULT: No, I do not think that is quite right. First, you know how I am. I am always a bit suspicious of these forms of synthesis which present French thought as Freudian-Marxist at one stage and then as having discovered Nietzsche at another. Since 1945, for a whole range of political and cultural reasons, Marxism in France was a kind of horizon which Sartre thought for a time was impossible to surpass. At that time, it was definitely a very closed horizon, and a very imposing one. Also, we should not forget that throughout the period from 1945 to 1955 in France, the entire French university — the young French university, as opposed to what had been the traditional university — was very much preoccupied with the task of building something which was not Freudian-Marxist but Husserlian-Marxist: the phenomenology-Marxism relation. That is what was at stake in the debates and efforts of a whole series of people. Merleau-Ponty and Sartre, in moving from phenomenology to Marxism, were definitely operating on that axis. Desanti too . . .
RAULET: Dufrenne, even Lyotard.
FOUCAULT: And Ricoeur, who was certainly not a Marxist, but a phenomenologist in no way oblivious to Marxism . . . So, at first they tried to wed Marxism and phenomenology; and it was later, once a certain kind of structural thinking — structural method — had begun to develop, that we saw structuralism replace phenomenology and become coupled with Marxism. It was a movement from phenomenology towards Marxism and essentially it concerned the problem of language. That, I think was

1. The exact quotation can be found in transcript of the proceedings at Vincennes, December 1969, published in *Le Magazine Littéraire*, No. 121, February 1977. "What you as a revolutionary aspire to is a master. You will have one." (Translator's note).

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a fairly critical point: Merleau-Ponty's encounter with language. And, as you know, Merleau-Ponty's later efforts addressed that question. I remember clearly some lectures in which Merleau-Ponty began speaking of Saussure who, even if he had been dead for 50 years, was quite unknown, not so much to French linguists and philologists, but to the cultured public. So the problem of language appeared and it was clear that phenomenology was no match for structural analysis in accounting for the effects of meaning that could be produced by a structure of the linguistic type, in which the subject (in the phenomenological sense) did not intervene to confer meaning. And quite naturally, with the phenomenological spouse finding herself disqualified by her inability to address language, structuralism became the new bride. That is how I would look at it. Even so, psychoanalysis — in large part under the influence of Lacan — also raised a problem which, though very different, was not analogous. For the unconscious could not feature in any discussion of a phenomenological kind; of which the most conclusive proof, as the French saw it anyhow, was the fact that Sartre and Merleau-Ponty — I am not talking about the others — were always trying to break down what they saw as positivism, or mechanism, or Freudian *"chosisme"* in order to affirm a constituting subject. And when Lacan, around the time that questions of language were beginning to be posed, remarked, "Whatever you do, the unconscious as such can never be reduced to the effects of a conferral of meaning to which the phenomenological subject is susceptible," he was posing a problem absolutely symmetrical with that of the linguists. Once again, the phenomenological subject was disqualified by psychoanalysis, as it had been by linguistic theory. And it is quite understandable at that point that Lacan could say the unconscious was structured like a language. For one and all, it was the same type of problem. So we had a Freudian-structuralist-Marxism: and with phenomenology disqualified for the reasons I have just outlined, there was simply a succession of fiancées, each flirting with Marx in turn. Only all was not exactly going well. Of course, I am describing it as though I were talking about a very general movement. What I describe did undoubtedly take place and it involved a certain number of individuals; but there were also people who did not follow the movement. I am thinking of those who were interested in the history of science — an important tradition in France, probably since the time of Comte. Particularly around Canguilhem, an extremely influential figure in the French University — the young French University. Many of his students were neither Marxists nor Freudians, nor structuralists. And here I am speaking of myself.

RAULET: You were one of those people, then?

FOUCAULT: I have never been a Freudian, I have never been a Marxist and I have never been a structuralist.

RAULET: Yes, here too, as a formality and just so the American reader is under no misapprehensions, we only need to look at the dates. You began . . .

FOUCAULT: My first book was written towards the end of my student days. It was *Madness and Civilization*, written between '55 and '60. This book is neither Freudian nor Marxist nor structuralist. Now, as it happened, I had read Nietzsche in '53 and, curious as it may seem, from a perspective of inquiry into the history of knowledge — the history of reason: how does one elaborate a history of rationality? This was the problem of the 19th century.

RAULET: Knowledge, reason, rationality.

FOUCAULT: Knowledge, reason, rationality, the possibility of elaborating a history of rationality . . . I would say that here again, we run across phenomenology, in someone like Koyré, a historian of science, with his German background, who came to France

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between 1930 and '35, I believe, and developed a historical analysis of the forms of rationality and knowledge in a phenomenological perspective. For me, the problem was framed in terms not unlike those we mentioned earlier. Is the phenomenological, transhistorical subject able to provide an account of the historicity of reason? Here, reading Nietzsche was the point of rupture for me. There is a history of the subject just as there is a history of reason; but we can never demand that the history of reason unfold at a first and founding act of the rationalist subject. I read Nietzsche by chance, and I was surprised to see that Canguilhem, the most influential historian of science in France at the time, was also very interested in Nietzsche and was thoroughly receptive to what I was trying to do.

RAULET: On the other hand, there are no perceptible traces of Nietzsche in his work . . .

FOUCAULT: But there are; and they are very clear. There are even explicit references; more explicit in his later texts than in his earlier ones. The relation of the French to Nietzsche and even the relation of all 20th century thought to Nietzsche was difficult, for understandable reasons . . . But I am talking about myself. We should also talk about Deleuze. Deleuze wrote his book on Nietzsche around 1960. The book must have appeared in '65. He was interested in empiricism, in Hume, and again in the question: is the theory of the subject which we have in phenomenology a satisfactory one? He could elude this question by means of the bias of Hume's empiricism. I am convinced that he encountered Nietzsche under the same conditions. So I would say that everything which took place in the sixties arose from a dissatisfaction with the phenomenological theory of the subject, and involved different escapades, subterfuges, break-throughs, according to whether we use a negative or a positive term, in the direction of linguistics, psychoanalysis or Nietzsche.

RAULET: At any rate, Nietzsche represented a determining experience for the abolition of the founding act of the subject.

FOUCAULT: Exactly. And this is where French writers like Bataille and Blanchot were important for us. I said earlier that I wondered why I had read Nietzsche. But I know very well. I read him because of Bataille, and Bataille because of Blanchot. So, it is not at all true that Nietzsche appeared in 1972. He appeared in 1972 for people who were Marxists during the '60s and who emerged from Marxism by way of Nietzsche. But the first people who had recourse to Nietzsche were not looking for a way out of Marxism. They wanted a way out of phenomenology.

RAULET: You have spoken about historians of science, of writing a history of knowledge, a history of rationality and a history of reason. Before returning to Nietzsche, could we briefly define the four terms, which might well be taken — in the light of what you have said — to be synonymous?

FOUCAULT: No, no. I was describing a movement which involved many factors and many different problems. I am not saying that these problems are identical. I am speaking about the kinship between the lines of inquiry and the proximity of those who undertook them.

RAULET: All the same, could we try to specify the relation? It is true that this can definitely be found in your books, particularly, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Nonetheless, could we try to specify these relations between science, knowledge and reason?

FOUCAULT: It is not very easy in an interview. I would say that the history of science has played an important role in philosophy in France. I would say that perhaps if modern philosophy (that of the 19th and 20th centuries) derives in great part from the Kantian question, "Was ist Aufklärung?" or, in other words, if we admit that one of the

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main functions of modern philosophy has been an inquiry into the historical point at which reason could appear in its "adult" form, "unchaperoned," then the function of 19th century philosophy consisted in asking, "What is this moment when reason accedes to autonomy? What is the meaning of a history of reason and what value can be ascribed to the ascendancy of reason in the modern world, through these three great forms: scientific thought, technical apparatus and political organization?" I think one of philosophy's great functions was to inquire into these three domains, in some sense to take stock of things or smuggle an anxious question into the rule of reason. To continue then . . . to pursue the Kantian question, "Was ist Aufklärung?" This reprise, this reiteration of the Kantian question in France assumed a precise and perhaps, moreover, an inadequate form: "What is the history of science?" What happened, between Greek mathematics and modern physics, as this universe of science was built? From Comte right through the 1960s, I think the philosophical function of the history of science has been to pursue this question. Now in Germany this question "What is the history of reason, of rational forms in Europe?" did not appear so much in the history of science but in the current of thought which runs from Max Weber to Critical Theory.

RAULET: Yes, the meditation on norms, on values.

FOUCAULT: From Max Weber to Habermas. And the same question arises here. How do matters stand with the history of reason, with the ascendancy of reason, and with the different forms in which this ascendancy operates? Now, the striking thing is that France knew absolutely nothing — or only vaguely, only very indirectly — about the current of Weberian thought. Critical Theory was hardly known in France and the Frankfurt School was practically unheard of. This, by the way, raises a minor historical problem which fascinates me and which I have not been able to resolve at all. It is common knowledge that many representatives of the Frankfurt School came to Paris in 1935, seeking refuge, and left very hastily, sickened presumably — some even said as much — but saddened anyhow not to have found more of an echo. Then came 1940, but they had already left for England and the US, where they were actually much better received. The understanding that might have been established between the Frankfurt School and French philosophical thought — by way of the history of science and therefore the question of the history of rationality — never occurred. And when I was a student, I can assure you that I never once heard the name of the Frankfurt School mentioned by any of my professors.

RAULET: It is really quite astonishing.

FOUCAULT: Now, obviously, if I had been familiar with the Frankfurt School, if I had been aware of it at the time, I would not have said a number of stupid things that I did say and I would have avoided many of the detours which I made while trying to pursue my own humble path — when, meanwhile, avenues had been opened up by the Frankfurt School. It is a strange case of non-penetration between two very similar types of thinking which is explained, perhaps, by that very similarity. Nothing hides the fact of a problem in common better than two similar ways of approaching it.

RAULET: What you have just said about the Frankfurt School, (about Critical Theory, if you like) which might, under different circumstances, have spared you some fumblings, is even more interesting in view of the fact that one finds a Negt or a Habermas doffing his hat to you. In an interview I did with Habermas, he praised your "masterly description of the bifurcation of reason" — the bifurcation of reason at a given moment. But I have still wondered whether you would agree with this bifurcation of reason as conceived by Critical Theory — with the dialectic of reason, in other words, whereby reason becomes perverse under the effects of its own strength, transformed

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and reduced to instrumental knowledge. The prevailing idea in Critical Theory is the dialectical continuity of reason, and of a perversion that completely transformed it at a certain stage — which it now becomes a question of rectifying. That is what seemed to be at issue in the struggle for emancipation. Basically, to judge from your work, the will to knowledge has never ceased to bifurcate in some way or another — bifurcating hundreds of times in the course of history. Perhaps "bifurcate" is not even the right word . . . Reason has split knowledge again and again.

FOUCAULT: Yes, yes. I think that the blackmail which has very often been at work in every critique of reason or every critical inquiry into the history of rationality (either you accept rationality or you fall prey to the irrational) operates as though a rational critique of rationality were impossible, or as though a rational history of all the ramifications and all the bifurcations, a contingent history of reason, were impossible . . . I think, that since Max Weber, in the Frankfurt School and anyhow for many historians of science such as Canguilhem, it was a question of isolating the form of rationality presented as dominant, and endowed with the status of the one-and-only reason, in order to show that it is only *one* possible form among others. In this French history of science — I consider it quite important — the role of Bachelard, whom I have not mentioned so far, is also crucial.

RAULET: Even so, this praise from Habermas is a little barbed. According to Habermas, you provided a masterly description of the "moment reason bifurcated." This bifurcation was unique. It happened once. At a certain point, reason took a turn which led it towards an instrumental rationality, an auto-reduction, a self-limitation. This bifurcation, if it is also a division, happened once and once only in history, separating the two realms with which we have been acquainted since Kant. This analysis of bifurcation is Kantian. There is the knowledge of understanding and the knowledge of reason, there is instrumental reason and there is moral reason. To assess this bifurcation, we clearly situate ourselves at the vantage point of practical reason, or moral-practical reason. Whence a unique bifurcation, a separation of technique and practice which continues to dominate the entire German history of ideas. And as you said earlier, this tradition arises from the question, "Was ist Aufklärung?" Now, in my view, this praise reduces your own approach to the history of ideas.

FOUCAULT: True, I would not speak about *one* bifurcation of reason but more about an endless, multiple bifurcation — a kind of abundant ramification. I do not address the point at which reason became instrumental. At present, for example, I am studying the problem of techniques of the self in Greek and Roman antiquity; how man, human life and the self were all objects of a certain number of *technai* which, with their exacting rationality, could well be compared to any technique of production.

RAULET: Without comprising the whole of society.

FOUCAULT: Right. And what led the *techne* of self to develop...everything propitious to the development of a technology of the self can very well be analysed, I think, and situated as a historical phenomenon — which does not constitute *the* bifurcation of reason. In this abundance of branchings, ramifications, breaks and ruptures, it was an important event, or episode; it had considerable consequences, but it was not a *unique* phenomenon.

RAULET: But directly we cease to view the self-perversion of reason as a unique phenomenon, occurring only once in history at a moment that reason loses something essential, something substantial — as we would have to say after Weber — would you not agree that your work aims to rehabilitate a fuller version of reason? Can we find, for example, another conception of reason implicit in your approach; a project of

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rationality that differs from the one we have nowadays?

FOUCAULT: Yes, but here, once more, I would try to take my distance from phenomenology, which was my point of departure. I do not believe in a kind of founding act whereby reason, in its essence, was discovered or established and from which it was subsequently diverted by such and such an event. I think, in fact, that reason is self-created, which is why I have tried to analyse forms of rationality: different foundations, different creations, different modifications in which rationalities engender one another,oppose and pursue one another. Even so, you cannot assign a point at which reason would have lost sight of its fundamental project, or even a point at which the rational becomes the irrational. During the 1960's, I wanted to begin as much with the phenomenological account (with its foundation and essential project of reason, from which we have shifted away on account of some forgetfulness and to which we must return) as with the Marxist account, or the account of Lukács. A rationality existed, and it was the form *par excellence* of Reason itself, but a certain number of social conditions (capitalism, or rather, the shift from one form of capitalism to another) precipitated this rationality into a crisis, i.e., a forgetting of reason, a fall into the irrational. I tried to take my bearings in relation to these two major models, presented very schematically and unfairly.

RAULET: In these models, we see either a unique bifurcation or a forgetfulness, at a given moment, following the confiscation of reason by a class. Thus, the movement across history towards emancipation consists not only in reappropriating what was confiscated (to confiscate it again) but — on the contrary — in giving reason back its truth, intact, investing it with the status of an absolutely universal science. For you, clearly — you have made it plain in your writing — there is no project of a new science, of a broader science.

FOUCAULT: Definitely not.

RAULET: But you show that each time a type of rationality asserts itself, it does so by a kind of cut-out — by exclusion or by self-demarcation, drawing a boundary between self and other. Does your project include any effort to rehabilitate this other? Do you think, for example, in the silence of the mad person you might discover a language that would have much to say about the conditions in which works are brought into existence?

FOUCAULT: Yes, what interested me, starting out from the general frame of reference we mentioned earlier, were precisely the forms of rationality applied by the human subject to itself. While historians of science in France were interested essentially in the problem of how a scientific object is constituted, the question I asked myself was this: how is it that the human subject took itself as the object of possible knowledge? Through what forms of rationality and historical conditions? And finally at what price? This is my question: at what price can subjects speak the truth about themselves? At what price can subjects speak the truth about themselves as mad persons? At the price of constituting the mad person as absolutely other, paying not only the theoretical price but also an institutional and even an economic price, as determined by the organization of psychiatry. An ensemble of complex, staggered elements where you find that institutional game-playing, class relations, professional conflicts, modalities of knowledge and, lastly, a whole history of the subject of reason are involved. That is what I have tried to piece back together. Perhaps the project is utterly mad, very complex — and I have only brought a few moments to light, a few specific points such as the problem of the mad subject and what it is. How can the truth of the sick subject ever be told? That is the substance of my first two books. *The Order of Things* asked the price

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of problematizing and analysing the speaking subject, the working subject, the living subject. Which is why I attempted to analyse the birth of grammar, general grammar, natural history and economics. I went on to pose the same kind of question in the case of the criminal and systems of punishment: how to state the truth of oneself, insofar as one might be a criminal subject. I will be doing the same thing with sexuality, only going back much further: how does the subject speak truthfully about itself, inasmuch as it is the subject of sexual pleasure? And at what price?

RAULET: According to the relation of subjects to whatever they are, in each case, through the constitution of language or knowledge.

FOUCAULT: It is an analysis of the relation between forms of reflexivity — a relation of self to self — and, hence, of relations between forms of reflexivity and the discourse of truth, forms of rationality and effects of knowledge.

RAULET: In any event, it is not a case of exhuming some prehistorical "archaic" by means of archaeology. (You shall see why I ask this question. It directly concerns certain readings of the so-called French Nietzschean current in Germany.)

FOUCAULT: No, absolutely not. I meant this word "archaeology," which I no longer use, to suggest that the kind of analysis I was using was out-of-phase, not in terms of time but by virtue of the level at which it was situated. Studying the history of ideas, as they evolve, is not my problem so much as trying to discern beneath them how one or another object could take shape as a possible object of knowledge. Why, for instance did madness become, at a given moment, an object of knowledge corresponding to a certain type of knowledge? By using the word "archaeology" rather than "history," I tried to designate this desynchronisation between ideas about madness and the constitution of madness as an object.

RAULET: I asked this question because nowadays there is a tendency — its pretext being the appropriation of Nietzsche by the New German Right — to lump everything together; to imagine that French Nietzscheanism — if it exists at all — is in the same vein. All these elements are associated in order to recreate what are fundamentally the fronts of theoretical class struggle, so hard to find nowadays.

FOUCAULT: I do not believe there is a single Nietzscheanism. There are no grounds for believing that there is a true Nietzscheanism, or that ours is any truer than others. But those who found in Nietzsche, more than 35 years ago, a means of displacing themselves in terms of a philosophical horizon dominated by phenomenology and Marxism have nothing to do with those who use Nietzsche nowadays. In any case, even if Deleuze has written a superb book about Nietzsche, and although the presence of Nietzsche in his other works is clearly apparent, there is no deafening reference to Nietzsche, nor any attempt to wave the Nietzschean flag for rhetorical or political ends. It is striking that someone like Deleuze has simply taken Nietzsche seriously, which indeed he has. That is what I wanted to do. What serious use can Nietzsche be put to? I have lectured on Nietzsche but written very little about him. The only rather extravagant homage I have rendered Nietzsche was to call the first volume of my *History of Sexuality* "The Will to Knowledge."

RAULET: Certainly, as regards the will to knowledge, I think we have been able to see in what you have just said that it was always a *relation*. I suppose you will detest this word with its Hegelian ring. Perhaps we should say "evaluation" as Nietzsche would; a way of evaluating truth. At any rate, a way in which force, neither an archaic instance nor an originary or original resourse, is actualised; and so too, a relation of forces and perhaps already a relation of power in the constituting act of all knowledge.

FOUCAULT: I would not say so. That is too involved. My problem is the relation of self to

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self and of telling the truth. My relation to Nietzsche, or what I owe Nietzsche, derives mostly from the texts of around 1880, where the question of truth, the history of truth and the will to truth were central to his work. Did you know that Sartre's first text — written when he was a young student — was Nietzschean? "The History of Truth," a little paper first published in a *Lycée* review around 1925. He began with the same problem. And it is very odd that his approach should have shifted from the history of truth to phenomenology, while for the next generation — ours — the reverse was true.

RAULET: I think we are now in the process of clarifying what you mean by "will to knowledge" — this reference to Nietzsche. You concede a certain kinship with Deleuze but only up to a point. Would this kinship extend as far as the Deleuzian notion of desire?

FOUCAULT: No, definitely not.

RAULET: I am asking this question because Deleuzian desire — productive desire — becomes precisely this kind of originary resource which then begins to generate forms.

FOUCAULT: I do not want to take up a position on this, or say that Deleuze may have had in mind. The moment a kind of thought is constituted, fixed or identified within a cultural tradition, it is quite normal that this cultural tradition should take hold of it, make what it wants of it and have it say what it did not mean, by implying that this is merely another form of what it was actually trying to say. Which is all a part of cultural play. But my relation to Deleuze is evidently not that; so I will not say what I think he meant. All the same, I think his task was, at least for a long time, to formulate the problem of desire. And evidently the effects of the relation to Nietzsche are visible in his theory of desire, whereas my own problem has always been the question of truth, of telling the truth, the *wahr-sagen* — what it is to tell the truth — and the relation between "telling the truth" and forms of reflexivity, of self upon self.

RAULET: Yes, but I think Nietzsche makes no fundmental distinction between will to knowledge and will to power.

FOUCAULT: I think there is a perceptible displacement in Nietzsche's texts between those which are broadly preoccupied with the question of will to knowledge and those which are preoccupied with will to power. But I do not want to get into this argument for the very simple reason that it is years since I have read Nietzsche.

RAULET: It is important to try to clarify this point, I think, precisely because of the hold-all approach which characterizes the way this question is received abroad, and in France for that matter.

FOUCAULT: I would say, in any case, that my relation to Nietzsche has not been historical. The actual history of Nietzsche's thought interests me less than the kind of challenge I felt one day, a long time ago, reading Nietzsche for the first time. When you open *The Gay Science* after you have been trained in the great, time-honored university traditions — Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Husserl — and you come across these rather strange, witty, graceful texts, you say: Well I won't do what my contemporaries, colleagues or professors are doing; I won't just dismiss this. What is the maximum of philosophical intensity and what are the current philosophical effects to be found in these texts? That, for me, was the challenge of Nietzsche.

RAULET: In the way all this is received at the moment, I think there is a second hold-all concept, i.e., post-modernity, which quite a few people refer to and which also plays a role in Germany, since Habermas has taken up the term in order to criticise this trend in all its aspects . . .

FOUCAULT: What are we calling post-modernity? I'm not up to date.

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RAULET:...the current of North American sociology (Bell) as much as what is known as post-modernity in art, which would require another definition (perhaps a return to a certain formalism). Anyway, Habermas attributes the term post-modernity to the French current, the tradition, as he says in his text on post-modernity, "running from Bataille to Derrida by way of Foucault." This is an important question in Germany, because reflections on modernity have existed for a long time — even since Weber. What is post-modernity, as regards the aspect which interests us here? Mainly, it is the idea of modernity,of reason, we find in Lyotard: a "grand narrative" from which we have finally been freed by a kind of salutary awakening. Post-modernity is a breaking apart of reason; Deleuzian schizophrenia. Post-modernity reveals, at least, that reason has only been one narrative among others in history; a grand narrative, certainly, but one of many, which can now be followed by other narratives. In your vocabulary, reason was *one* form of will to knowledge. Would you agree that this has to do with a certain current? Do you situate yourself within this current; and, if so, how?

FOUCAULT: I must say that I have trouble answering this. First, because I've never clearly understood what was meant in France by the word "modernity." In the case of Baudelaire, yes, but thereafter I think the sense begins to get lost. I do not know what Germans mean by modernity. The Americans were planning a kind of seminar with Habermas and myself. Habermas had suggested the theme of "modernity" for the seminar. I feel troubled here because I do not grasp clearly what that might mean, though the word itself is unimportant; we can always use any arbitrary label. But neither do I grasp the kind of problems intended by this term — or how they would be common to people thought of as being "post-modern." While I see clearly that behind what was known as structuralism, there was a certain problem — broadly speaking, that of the subject and the recasting of the subject — I do not understand what kind of problem is common to the people we call post-modern or post-structuralist.

RAULET: Obviously, reference or opposition to modernity is not only ambiguous, it actually confines modernity. Modernity also has several definitions: the historian's definition, Weber's definition, Adorno's definition and Benjamin's of Baudelaire, as you've mentioned. So there are at least some references. Habermas, in opposition to Adorno, seems to privilege the tradition of reason, i.e., the Weberian definition of modernity. It is in relation to this that he sees in post-modernity the crumbling away or the break-up of reason and allows himself to declare that one of the forms of post-modernity — the one which is in relation with the Weberian definition — is the current that envisages reason as *one* form among others of will to knowledge — a grand narrative, but *one* narrative among others.

FOUCAULT: That is not my problem, insofar as I am not prepared to identify reason entirely with the totality of rational forms which have come to dominate — at any given moment, in our own era and even very recently — in types of knowledge, forms of technique and modalities of government or domination: realms where we can see all the major applications of rationality. I am leaving the problem of art to one side. It is complicated. For me, no given form of rationality is actually reason. So I do not see how we can say that the forms of rationality which have been dominant in the three sectors I have mentioned are in the process of collapsing and disappearing. I cannot see any disappearance of that kind. I can see multiple transformations, but I cannot see why we should call this transformation a collapse of reason. Other forms of rationality are created endlessly. So there is no sense at all to the proposition that reason is a long narrative which is now finished, and that another narrative is under way.

RAULET: Let us just say that the field is open to many forms of narrative.

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FOUCAULT: Here, I think, we are touching on one of the forms — perhaps we should call them habits — one of the most harmful habits in contemporary thought, in modern thought even; at any rate, in post-Hegelian thought: the analysis of the present as being precisely, in history, a present of rupture, or of high point, or of completion or of a returning dawn, etc. The solemnity with which everyone who engages in philosophical discourse reflects on his own time strikes me as a flaw. I can say so all the more firmly since it is something I have done myself; and since, in someone like Nietzsche, we find this incessantly — or, at least, insistently enough. I think we should have the modesty to say to ourselves that, on the one hand, the time we live in is not *the* unique or fundamental or irruptive point in history where everything is completed and begun again. We must also have the modesty to say, on the other hand, that — even without this solemnity — the time we live in is very interesting; it needs to be analysed and broken down, and that we would do well to ask ourselves, "What is the nature of our present?" I wonder if one of the great roles of philosophical thought since the Kantian "Was ist Aufklärung?" might not be characterized by saying that the task of philosophy is to describe the nature of the present, and of "ourselves in the present." With the proviso that we do not allow ourselves the facile, rather theatrical declaration that this moment in which we exist is one of total perdition, in the abyss of darkness, or a triumphant daybreak, etc. It is a time like any other, or rather, a time which is never quite like any other.

RAULET: This poses dozens of questions; ones that you have posed yourself in any case. What is the nature of the present? Is the era characterised more than others, in spite of everything, by a greater fragmentation, by "deterritorialization" and "schizophrenia" — no need to take a position on these terms?

FOUCAULT: I would like to say something about the function of any diagnosis concerning the nature of the present. It does not consist in a simple characterization of what we are but, instead — by following lines of fragility in the present — in managing to grasp why and how that-which-is might no longer be that-which-is. In this sense, any description must always be made in accordance with these kinds of virtual fracture which open up the space of freedom understood as a space of concrete freedom, i.e., of possible transformation.

RAULET: Is it here, along the fractures, that the work of the intellectual — practical work, quite clearly — is situated?

FOUCAULT: That is my own belief. I would say also, about the work of the intellectual, that it is fruitful in a certain way to describe that-which-is by making it appear as something that might not be, or that might not be as it is. Which is why this designation or description of the real never has a prescriptive value of the kind, "because this is, that will be." It is also why, in my opinion, recourse to history — one of the great facts in French philosophical thought for at least twenty years — is meaningful to the extent that history serves to show how that-which-is has not always been; i.e., that the things which seem most evident to us are always formed in the confluence of encounters and chances, during the course of a precarious and fragile history. What reason perceives as *its* necessity, or rather, what different forms of rationality offer as their necessary being, can perfectly well be shown to have a history; and the network of contingencies from which it emerges can be traced. Which is not to say, however, that these forms of rationality were irrational. It means that they reside on a base of human practice and human history; and that since these things have been made, they can be unmade, as long as we know how it was that they were made.

RAULET: This work on the fractures, both descriptive and practical, is field work.

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FOUCAULT: Perhaps it is field work and perhaps it is a work which can go further back in terms of historical analysis, starting with questions posed in the field.
RAULET: Would you describe the work on these fracture areas, work in the field, as the microphysics of power, the analytics of power?
FOUCAULT: Yes, it is something like that. It has struck me that these forms of rationality — put to work in the process of domination — deserve analysis in themselves, provided we recognize from the outset that they are not foreign to other forms of power which are put to work, for instance, in knowledge or technique. On the contrary, there is exchange; there are transmissions, transferences, interferences. But I wish to emphasize that I do not think it is possible to point to a unique form of rationality in these three realms. We come across the same types, but displaced. At the same time, there is multiple, compact interconnection, but no isomorphism.
RAULET: In all eras or specifically?
FOUCAULT: There is no general law indicating the types of relation between rationalities and the procedures of domination which are put to work.
RAULET: I ask this question because there is a scheme at work in a certain number of criticisms made about you. Baudrillard's criticism, for instance, is that you speak at a very precise moment and conceive a moment in which power has become "unidentifiable through dissemination." This unidentifiable dissemination, this necessary multiplication, is reflected in the microphysical approach. Or, again, in the opinion of Alexander Schubert,[2] you address a point where capitalism has dissolved the subject in a way which makes it possible to admit that the subject has only ever been a multiplicity of positions.
FOUCAULT: I would like to return to this question in a moment, because I had already begun to talk about two or three things. The first is that in studying the rationality of dominations, I try to establish interconnections which are not isomorphisms. Secondly, when I speak of power relations, of the forms of rationality which can rule and regulate them, I am not referring to Power — with a capital P — dominating and imposing its rationality upon the totality of the social body. In fact, there are power relations. They are multiple; they have different forms, they can be in play in family relations, or within an institution, or an administration — or between a dominating and a dominated class power relations having specific forms of rationality, forms which are common to them, etc. It is a field of analysis and not at all a reference to any unique instance. Thirdly, in studying these power relations, I in no way construct a theory of Power. But I wish to know how the reflexivity of the subject and the discourse of truth are linked — "How can the subject tell the truth about itself?" — and I think that relations of power exerting themselves upon one another constitute one of the determining elements in this relation I am trying to analyze. This is clear, for example, in the first case I examined, that of madness. It was indeed through a certain mode of domination exercised by certain people upon certain other people, that the subject could undertake to tell the truth about its madness, presented in the form of the other. Thus, I am far from being a theoretician of power. At the limit, I would say that power, as an autonomous question, does not interest me. In many instances, I have been led to address the question of power only to the extent that the political analysis of power which was offered did not seem to me to account for the finer, more detailed phenomena I wish to evoke when I pose the question of telling the truth about oneself. If I tell the truth about myself, as I am now doing, it is in part that I am constituted as a subject across a number of power relations which are exerted over me and which I

2. *Die Decodierung des Menschen*, (Focus Verlag, 1981).

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exert over others. I say this in order to situate what for me is the question of power. To return to the question you raised earlier, I must admit that I see no grounds for the objection. I am not developing a theory of power. I am working on the history, at a given moment, of the way reflexivity of self upon self is established, and the discourse of truth that is linked to it. When I speak about institutions of confinement in the 18th century, I am speaking about power relations as they existed at the time. So I fail utterly to see the objection, unless one imputes to me a project altogether different from my own: either that of developing a general theory of power or, again, that of developing an analysis of power as it exists now. Not at all! I take psychiatry, of course, as it is now. In it, I look at the appearance of certain problems, in the very workings of the institution, which refer us, in my view, to a history — and a relatively long one, involving several centuries. I try to work on the history or archaeology, if you like, of the way people undertook to speak truthfully about madness in the 17th and 18th centuries. And I would like to bring it to light as it existed at the time. On the subject of criminals, for example, and the system of punishment established in the 18th century, which characterises our own penal system, I have not gone into detail on *all* kinds of power exercised in the 18th century. Instead, I have examined, in a certain number of model 18th century institutions, the forms of power that were exercised and how they were put into play. So I can see no relevance whatever in saying that power is no longer what it used to be.

RAULET: Two more rather disconnected questions, which nonetheless strike me as important. Let us begin with the status of the intellectual. We have broadly defined how you conceive the work, the practice even, of the intellectual. Would you be prepared to discuss here the philosophical situation in France along the following general lines? The function of the intellectual is no longer either to oppose the state with a universal reason or to provide it with its legitimation. Is there a connection with this rather strange, disconcerting situation we see today: a tacit kind of consensus among intellectuals with regard to the Left, and at the same time, the complete silence of thought on the Left — something one is tempted to see as forcing the powers of the Left to invoke very archaic themes of legitimation; the Socialist Party Congress at Valence with its rhetorical excesses, the class struggle...

FOUCAULT: The recent remarks of the President of the National Assembly to the effect that we must replace the egoist, individualist, bourgeois cultural model with a new cultural model of solidarity and sacrifice...I was not very old when Pétain came to power in France, but this year I recognised in the words of this socialist the very tones which lulled my childhood.

RAULET: Yes. Basically, we are witnessing the astonishing spectacle of a power, divested of intellectual logistics, invoking pretty obsolete themes of legitimation. As for intellectual logistics, it seems that as soon as the Left comes to power, no one on the Left has anything to say.

FOUCAULT: It is a good question. First, we should remember that if the Left exists in France — the Left in a general sense — and if there are people who have the sentiment of being on the Left, people who vote Left, and if there can be a substantial party of the Left (as the Socialist Party has become), I think an important factor has been the existence of a Left thought and a Left reflection, of an analysis, a multiplicity of analyses, developed on the Left, of political choices made on the Left since at least 1960, which have been made outside the parties. No thanks to the Communist Party, though, or to the old S.F.I.O. — which was not dead until '72 (it took a long time to die) — that the Left is alive and well in France. It is because, through the Algerian war for example, in a

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whole sector of intellectual life also, in sectors dealing with the problems of daily life, sectors like those of political and economic analysis, there was an extraordinarily lively Left thought. And it did not die at the very moment the parties of the Left became disqualified for different reasons. On the contrary.

RAULET: No, at the time, certainly not.

FOUCAULT: And we can say that the Left survived for fifteen years — the first fifteen years of Gaullism and then the regime which followed — because of that effort. Secondly, it should be noted that the Socialist Party was greeted so responsively in large part because it was reasonably open to these new attitudes, new questions and new problems. It was open to questions concerning daily life, sexual life, couples, women's issues. It was sensitive to the problem of self-management, for example. All these are themes of Left thought — a Left thought which is not encrusted in the political parties and which is not traditional in its approach to Marxism. New problems, new thinking — these have been crucial. I think that one day, when we look back at this episode in French history, we will see in it the growth of a new kind of Left thought which — in multiple and non-unified forms (perhaps one of its positive aspects) — has completely transformed the horizon of contemporary Left movements. We might well imagine this particular form of Left culture as being allergic to any party organization, incapable of finding its real expression in anything but *groupuscules* and individualities. But apparently not. Finally, there has been — as I said earlier — a kind of symbiosis which has meant that the new Socialist Party is now fairly saturated with these ideas. In any case — something worthy of note — we have seen a number of intellectuals keeping company with the Socialist Party. Of course, the Socialist Party's very astute political tactics and strategy — and this is not pejorative — account for their coming to power. But here again, the Socialist Party came to power after having absorbed a certain number of Left cultural forms. However, since the Congress of Metz, and *a fortiori*, the Congress of Valence — where we heard things such as we discussed earlier — it is clear that this Left thought is asking itself questions.

RAULET: Does this thought itself exist any more?

FOUCAULT: I do not know. We have to bear several complex factors in mind. We have to see, for example, that in the Socialist Party, this new Left thought was most active in the circle of someone like Rocard — that the light of Rocard and his group, and of the Rocard current in the Socialist Party, is now hidden under a bushel, has had a major effect. The situation is very complex. But I think that the rather wooden pronouncements of many Socialist Party leaders at present are a betrayal of the earlier hopes expressed by a large part of this Left thought. They also betray the recent history of the Socialist Party and they silence, in a fairly authoritarian manner, certain currents which exist within the party itself. Undoubtedly, confronted with this phenomenon, intellectuals are tending to keep quiet. (I say tending, because it is a journalistic obsession to say that the intellectuals are keeping quiet). Personally, I know several intellectuals who have reacted, who have given their opinion on some measure or on some problem. And I think that if we drew up an exact balance sheet of interventions by intellectuals over the last few months, there would certainly not be any less than before. Anyway, for my part, I have never written as many articles in the press as I have since word went out that I was keeping quiet. Still, let's not worry about me personally. It is true that these reactions are not a kind of assertive choice. They are finely nuanced interventions — hesitant, slightly doubtful, slightly encouraging, etc. But they correspond to the present state of affairs and instead of complaining about the silence of intellectuals, we should recognize much more clearly their thoughtful reserve in res-

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ponse to a recent event, a recent process, whose outcome we do not yet know for certain.

RAULET: No necessary relation, then, between *this* political situation, *this* type of discourse and the thesis, nonetheless very widespread, that reason is power and so we are to divest ourselves of the one and the other?

FOUCAULT: No. You must understand that is part of the destiny common to all problems once they are posed: they degenerate into slogans. Nobody has said, "Reason is power." I do not think anyone has said knowledge is a kind of power.

RAULET: It has been said.

FOUCAULT: It has been said but you have to understand that when I read — and I know it has being attributed to me — the thesis, "Knowledge is power," or "Power is knowledge," I begin to laugh, since studying their *relation* is precisely my problem. If they were identical, I would not have to study them and I would be spared a lot of fatigue as a result. The very fact that I pose the question of their relation proves clearly that I do not *identify* them.

RAULET: Last question. The view that Marxism is doing rather badly today because it drank from the springs of the Enlightenment, has dominated thought, whether we like it or not, since the '70s, if only because a number of individuals — intellectuals — known as the New Philosophers have vulgarised the theme. So, Marxism, we are told, is doing fairly badly.

FOUCAULT: I do not know if it is doing well or badly. It is an idea that has dominated thought, or philosophy; that is the formula I stop at, if you like. I think you are quite right to put the question, and to put it in that way. I would be inclined to say — I nearly stopped you there — that this view has not dominated thought so much as the "lower depths" of thought. But that would be facile. Uselessly polemicals. And it is not really fair. I think we should recognise that in France, towards the '50s, there were two circuits of thought which, if not foreign to one another, were practically independent of one another. There was what I would call the university circuit — a circuit of scholarly thought — and then there was the circuit of open thought, or mainstream thought. When I say "mainstream," I do not necessarily mean poor quality. But a university book, a thesis, a course, etc., were things you found in the academic presses, available to university readers. They had scarcely any influence, except in universities. There was the special case of Bergson. That was exceptional. But from the end of the war onwards — and no doubt Existentialism played a part in this — we have seen ideas of profoundly academic origins, or roots (and the roots of Sartre, after all, are Husserl and Heidegger, who were hardly public dancers) addressed to a much broader public than that of the universities. Now, even though there is nobody of Sartre's stature to continue it, this phenomenon has become democratized. Only Sartre — or perhaps Sartre and Merleau-Ponty — could do it. But then it tended to become something within everybody's range, more or less. And for a certain number of reasons. First, there was the dislocation of the university, the growing number of students and professors, etc., who came to constitute a kind of social mass; the dislocation of internal structures and a broadening of the university public; also the diffusion of culture (by no means a negative thing). The public's cultural level, on average, has really risen considerably and, whatever one says, television has played a major role. People come to see that there is a new history, etc. Add to this all the political phenomena — the groups and movements half-inside and half-outside the universities. It all gave university activity an echo which reverberated widely beyond academic institutions or even groups of specialist, professional intellectuals. One remarkable phenomenon in France at the

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moment is the almost complete absence of specialized philosophy journals. Or they are more or less worthless. So when you want to write something, were do you publish? Where *can* you publish? In the end, you can only manage to slip something into one of the wide-circulation weeklies and general interest magazines. That is very significant. And so what happens — and what is fatal in such situations — is that a fairly evolved discourse, instead of being relayed by additional work which perfects it (either with criticism or amplification), rendering it more difficult and even finer, nowadays undergoes a process of amplification from the bottom up. Little by little, from the book to the review, to the newspaper article, and from the newspaper article to television, we come to summarise a work, or a problem, in terms of slogans. This passage of the philosophical question into the realm of the slogan, this transformation of the Marxist question, which becomes "Marxism is dead," is not the responsibility of any one person in particular, but we can see the slide whereby philosophical thought, or a philosophical issue, becomes a consumer item. In the past, there were two different circuits. Even if it could not avoid all the pitfalls, the institutional circuit, which had its drawbacks — it was closed, dogmatic, academic — nevertheless managed to sustain less heavy losses. The tendency to entropy was less, while nowadays entropy sets in at an alarming rate. I could give personal examples. It took fifteen years to convert my book about madness into a slogan: all mad people were confined in the 18th century. But it did not even take 15 months — it only took three weeks — to convert my book on will to knowledge into the slogan "Sexuality has never been repressed." In my own experience, I have seen this entropy accelerate in a detestable way for philosophical thought. But it should be remembered that this means added responsibility for people who write.

RAULET: I was tempted for a moment to say in conclusion — in the form of a question — not wanting to substitute one slogan for another: is Marxism not finished then? In the sense you use in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* that a "non-falsified Marxism would help us to formulate a general theory of discontinuity, series, limits, unities, specific orders, autonomies and differentiated dependencies."

FOUCAULT: Yes. I am reluctant to make assessments about the type of culture that may be in store. Everything is present, you see, at least as a virtual object, inside a given culture. Or everything that has already featured once. The problem of objects that have never featured in the culture is another matter. But it is part of the function of memory and culture to be able to reactualize any objects whatever that have already featured. Repetition is always possible; repetition with application, transformation. God knows in 1945 Nietzsche appeared to be completely disqualified...It is clear, even if one admits that Marx will disappear for now, that he will reappear one day. What I desire — and it is here that my formulation has changed in relation to the one you cited — is not so much the defalsification and restitution of a true Marx, but the unburdening and liberation of Marx in relation to party dogma, which has constrained it, touted it and branished it for so long. The phrase "Marx is dead" can be given a conjunctural sense. One can say it is relatively true, but to say that Marx will disappear like that...

RAULET: But does this reference in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* mean that, in a certain way, Marx is at work in your own methodology?

FOUCAULT: Yes, absolutely. You see, given the period in which I wrote those books, it was good form (in order to be viewed favorably by the institutional Left) to cite Marx in the footnotes. So I was careful to steer clear of that.

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# THE RECONQUEST OF TIME*

## by André Gorz

The micro-electronic revolution differs from prior technical revolutions in one essential point: it does not merely abolish the most qualified intellectual and manual jobs; it also abolishes the repetitive tasks of unskilled workers (OS) in the industrial and tertiary sectors. To stress the deskilling entailed in this revolution is to mask the specific import of the current change. For, though it can, in certain situations, be used to increase domination and control over workers,[1] this change is not merely a new ultra-sophisticated form of Taylorism.

In contrast with Taylorism, the main objective is not to break the real power of skilled workers (OP). This has been a *fait accompli* for fifty years: skilled workers most often are just a small island in a sea of unskilled workers (OS). At least four-fifths of employees do not have, in matters of qualification, anything that could be compared with a complete trade permitting the mastery of a complete product and an ensemble of means of labor. The primary end of automatization and informatization is, rather, to abolish non-qualified jobs (by robotizing them) and, secondly, to banalize and homogenize the previously most qualified jobs. Economy of time (of work, of personnel) is the primary objective, and not the re-enforcement of the power to command.

If the hierarchy is crushed by this transformation, if the functions of management, supervision, and control are suppressed, this is not due to an attempt to break the power of those whom Marx called the officers and non-coms of production. Rather, it is because the automated systems automatize these functions by integrating them into the machine itself. There is, indeed, a leveling of qualifications. But this leveling is applied simultaneously to the upper and lower levels: the tasks formerly mastered by elite professionals are eliminated at the same time as those of the mass of unskilled workers (OS) are despecialized, made easier, and transformed into jobs of supervising machines.[2]

On the whole, over and above the undermining of traditional qualifications, work itself tends to be abolished. According to a study by Rosan of the Stanford Research Institute, (presented at the March 1979 congress of the United Auto Workers), 80% of manual tasks will be automated in the U.S. before the end of the century (i.e., 20 million of the 25 million current manual jobs). Office jobs will undergo an equally drastic reduction.

This process of the abolition of work cannot be reversed or restrained in the name of the employee's right to practice a complete trade. It is precisely because complete trades have already been eliminated from the general socialized production of goods and services that their automation has become possible. The great majority of jobs are

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* Translated by David J. Parent.

1. Cf. Michael Cooley, "Les Microprocesseurs ou les Hommes?" in *Actes du Colloque international Informatique et Société*, Vol. II, pp. 245-262, *La Documentation Française*, 1980.

2. Cf. on this subject Guy Caire's remarkable thesis, "Automation: technologie, travail rélations sociales," in *ADEFI, Les Mutations Technologiques*, pp. 165-194, *Economica* (1981).

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no longer a source of joy or pride to those who hold them. Automation can, under certain conditions, give them a richer life by liberating their time, by making possible a diversification of their activities and their centers of interest. Instead of a life entirely subject to the daily constraints and fatigue of mentally impoverishing work, automation can open the possibility of a kind of work which, by its reduced duration, could be just one dimension of an enriching life, and not necessarily the main one.[3]

It is, however, not a question of resigning oneself to alienating, impoverishing, and boring work. Instead, we must recognize that: 1) for the vast majority, work is just that — alienating, impoverishing, and boring; 2) it must be changed in order to cease being so; 3) this change, listed for twenty years as the primary objective of the most advanced part of the labor movement, will not be realized soon, and consequently, can not constitute in itself a current mobilizing objective; 4) on the other hand, a reduction of the place and time which alienated work occupies in our lives is within our range; this objective can be a mobilizing and liberating one; and collective reflections and actions directed toward this end can permit the fundamental redefinition of the conditions, content and nature of work.

*A Politics*

A drastic reduction of the duration of work is, however, not intrinsically liberatory, any more than the automation which makes it possible. First, this will be the case only in a social environment which does not presently exist (at least not generally) and secondly, if accompanied by a politics of time open to permanent elaboration and renegotiation. In the current social environment, only work, however ungratifying it may otherwise be, offers men and women occasions for association, communication and exchange. The non-work sphere is the sphere of solitude, isolation, enforced idleness for all those who dwell on the periphery and in the suburbs of the great metropolitan agglomerations.

Liberated time will be nothing else but empty time unless there are: a) A politics of collective equipment which endows communes, cities or large buildings, with places for meetings, exchange, and autonomous activities. Example: the municipal centers in Great Britain, which group in the same place a swimming pool, a library, a reading room, music- and play-rooms, a restaurant, a repair-shop and a hobby-shop. In the large Scandinavian buildings one finds collective areas such as a kitchen-restaurant, a laundry, hobby-shops, meeting-rooms, play-rooms (for children), a gymnasium. In Sweden, cooperatives and/or unions put studios and instructors (of carpentry, mechanics, electricity) at the disposal of their members after work-hours. "We unionists must also struggle so that the workers outside work can find an urban environment that enables them to develop their free activities." Michel Rolant proposed that the "union sections of the same neighborhood, or community, elaborate a plan of collective equipment and furnishing financed by 3 to 4% of the salary mass which each enterprise is obliged to devote to "social works," lodging, "permanent education," etc.[4] b) A politics of cooperation and voluntary association permitting the development, on a local and non-market basis, of all types of collective services which

3. Sir Adrian Cadbury, one of the largest and most advanced employers in Europe, forsees that "the majority of people would want their work to be integrated into their life and not the opposite" and "that the efficiency of their work will depend on the possibility given them to get more involved, to exercise greater influence on the decisions and objectives of their enterprise." Such an enterprise would have to be quite small to have a certain transparency (*The Guardian*, London, September 12, 1981).

4. Interview with Michel Rolant in *Le Nouvel Observateur*, May 21, 1979.

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are more effective, better adapted, and more flexible, and are less expensive where they do not have an institutional and state character (aid to the aged, child-care cooperatives, transportation cooperatives, etc.). At least a part of the savings which they make for the state should be put at the disposal of these informal cooperatives.[5]

Beyond collective and mutual self-service, the Anglo-Saxons have developed informal cooperatives of self-production, barter, and self-construction. The latter are based on the exchange of work between persons who are grouped to learn different construction trades and to help one another in building their respective houses.[6] The Swiss sociologist Nordal Akerman,[7] recommends cooperativization, based on voluntary labor, in the renovation and beautification of dwellings, as well as communal cooperatives for the production of consumer goods, combined with cooperatives for agricultural production, exchange of products and services, evaluated in number of work-hours, at least partly replacing monetary exchange.

A politics of time is the key both to shared work (i.e., its division among all those who desire to work) and a freer life. The same reduction of labor time will be creative of jobs or not, will be inexpensive or very expensive, capable of "changing life" or not, depending, for example, on whether it takes the form of the 35-hour 5-day week and one shift, longer yearly vacations, or the 32-hour 4-day week with two teams and the possibility for those who so desire to work only on Saturday and Sunday at full pay.

The politics of time will not be the same, depending on whether it guarantees everyone access to a job (even part-time, if they so desire) or whether all that counts are categorial interests and the careers of those who have a guaranteed full-time job.[8]

*To Negotiate the Objectives*

A politics for the liberation of time and work-sharing presupposes, on the level of every public service, branch or large enterprise, programming of productivity gains tied to technical evolution and a corresponding programming of the duration of labor-time and the level of the staff. This programming will lead to liberation only if it results in permanent negotiation on: a) the nature, modalities and rhythm of the introduction of technical changes; b) the nature of the tasks and the recasting of the grid of qualifications and wages; c) the level of the staff and the duration of labor time.

The conflict between categorial interests can be surmounted only if public debates allow for them to be confronted frankly, revealing what is at stake and drawing the bases for an agreement that corresponds to the common interest of the mass of workers.

Negotiation with economic and political decision-makers will necessarily be conflictual in nature. This will lead to a freer work and life only if the union is really autonomous. For the enterprise as well as the administration makes investments of pro-

5. This is the idea of a "third sector" propagated by Jacques Delors. Cf. especially "Echanges et Projects," in *La Democratie à portée de la main* (1977).

6. Numerous examples of self-production can be found in Guy Aznar, *Tous à mi-temps*. (Editions du Seul, 1981).

7. In *Can Sweden be Shrunk?* — condensation of a work that would deserve to be translated. English version appeared in *Developement Dialogue*, (Hammarskjoeld Foundation, Upsala).

8. The journal *Futuribles* (October 1981) presents three models of time policy. The same national production is assured by having 98% of permanent workers working for 31 hours per week or, on the other extreme, having 50% working for 6 months per year, 14% working on reduced time, and 30% working 40 hours per week.

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ductivity only in order to lower the costs (mainly wage-costs) per unit produced. To be sure, a perfect indexing of the duration of labor-time to productivity, with integral salary compensation, will effectively prevent this lowering of wage-costs. But this would discourage the economic decision-makers from investing: they would no longer have any interest in increasing productivity. If the union waits for gains in productivity to redistribute the profits in the form of reduced labor time, there will not be much to redistribute.

In order to encourage rather than discourage investments of productivity, the reduction of labor time must be taken not as a dependent, but as an independent variable: this ought not to be the end result but the purpose and motor to realizable gains in productivity. Accordingly: a) impose a programmed reduction of labor time at the branch-level and at the level of the economy as a whole, so as to compel corresponding investments of productivity; b) get involved in defining these investments; c) study the best way to reduce capital-cost per unit produced, by better use of installations which permit certain time-schedules (night-work must always be prohibited). According to a non-managerial American study,[9] the 32-hour 4-day formula with two shifts (plus, as the case may be, Saturday-Sunday shifts at double-pay) is bound to become generalized between now and 1990 by virtue of its advantages.

*Toward a Life-Salary*

Because of the differences in the evolution of productivity according to sectors, branch negotiations and agreements have to be framed within a general legislative agreement to ensure the necessary adjustments and equalizations. For it is unthinkable that labor time should vary greatly by sectors and enterprises. Their unification (for example 32 hours per week, then 28, etc.) presupposes increased numbers of employees in the sectors with slower evolution of productivity and lower numbers of employees in sectors of rapid evolution. The adjustments and transfers of personnel cannot, however, be instantaneous. Also, variations in the level of employment and a certain flexibility of employment remain inevitable. In order to avoid making such variety synonymous with unemployment, Swedish economists, following Gösta Rehn, propose to define the duration of labor time on the scale not of months, nor even of years, but of a five-year or ten-year period, or even the entire lifetime, with each person having the option to work little, much, or not at all, depending on the periods he chooses, while always retaining his income.[10]

In effect, this system leads to a guaranteed life-time salary in exchange for a periodically revisable minimum number of work hours to be supplied by each person during his active life. This minimum can, obviously, be exceeded by those who desire greater income: all they have to do is give up the days, weeks or months of nonwork to which they are entitled by a period of work.

In a refinement of the system proposed by Gunnar Adler Karlsson, each person would have a choice between different life styles, corresponding to different levels of income and different intensities of work, with a permanent right to change from one to the other; the life-time salary corresponding to the provision of the minimum of work (about 20,000 hour per life, actually) would provide for a decent but frugal life style. In this way, the necessary flexibility in the availability of work will be obtained without

9. Delphi poll of the University of Michigan and the Society of Manufacturing Engineers, (1978). Quoted in Joel Le Quement, *Les Robots, enjeux economiques et sociaux, La Documentation Française*, (1981).

10. Cf. Guy Aznar, *op. cit.*.

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coerced unemployment, by incentives to work more or less during certain periods, while no voluntary interruption of activity, however long it might be, would entail the loss of salary.

Assimilable to a system of lending and saving time (a "time-bank" fed by an *ad hoc* social assessment), this formula is, in fact, the generalization on the scale of the whole society of the type of branch agreements exemplified by the following: a) an agreement signed by the New York dock-workers (in October, 1976) provides for job-security and a guaranteed annual salary of about 90,000 francs even if the duration of work has been very slight in any year; b) The project of the general convention of the American metallurgists provides for "life-long employment" for its members with a life-time minimum salary equivalent to 30 hours per week, even if, for structural or economic reasons, the real duration of work is less.

These agreements limited to one branch are obviously of very restricted efficacy, since they permit the sharing of work only between employees of the branch already guaranteed permanent jobs and do not prevent recourse to sub-contracting, with its army of temporary and unprotected workers. The system of life-long salary, on the contrary, non-coercively redistributes both socially necessary work and all consumable production among the entire body of potential workers.

*Self-Management of Time*

Apart from a transition to a war-economy or to new forms of institutionalized waste, the rapid diminution of labor time is inscribed in the ongoing technical evolution. Under the condition of being shared equitably, salaried (i.e., dependent or "heteronomous") work will by the end of the century have ceased to be the main occupation (barring a catastrophe which nullifies all forecasts). It is thus urgent for us to prepare to be active and self-employed at tasks which will not be defined by a boss, the state, the Führer, or the electronic brain, but by ourselves. We must relearn to apply ourselves to what we do, not because we are paid to do it, but for the pleasure of creating, of giving, learning, of establishing non-market and non-hierarchic, practical and affective relations with others. For two hundred years our societies have been dominated by the productivist ethic with its praise of work as mortification, sacrifice, renunciation of living, of enjoyment, of being oneself. It is not an easy matter to eliminate this ethic and replace it by an ethic in which voluntary cooperation, self-determination, creativity, and the quality of relations with others and with nature are the dominant values.

One ought to consider that many men and women today who want to work, but not 39 hours per week all year long and all their lives, are simply opting for a life style which ought to be dominant some ten years from now. If the union movement were to reject or condemn them in the name of an obsolete religion of work, professionalism, or career, it would be just hurting itself. For, the majority of advocates of reduced time can never be convinced of the glorification of wage labor; they can never be convinced that this is the most important thing in life. By rejecting them off hand from union activity, one not only weakens this activity, but abandons the workers to part-time employment, without protection, at the employer's will. That is why the American unions, after having long rejected them, have come to consider "part-timers" as full-fledged members whose interests and rights deserve to be defended in the interest of all.

The reticence, indeed, the hostility, of most European unionists as regards "part-timers" is based on the following fear: salary demands (especially the demand for reduced work hours without loss of salary) run the risk of being undermined by people

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who show that they do not need a full salary to live. The employer could use them as an argument to refuse to pay a whole salary for reduced work time. A special study would be needed to examine whether this fear is unfounded, whether it can be alleviated by an adapted union strategy. But an "a la carte" system of work schedules and times does not necessarily play the employer's game; it can open to union action a very rich field of possibilities: the self-management of time on the level of plant, office, or service.

The system implemented by the large Beck stores in Munich is interesting in this regard. It allows each employee to choose, at the beginning of each month, the length of working time and the schedule. The only restriction to free choice is that the sum of preferences expressed must be compatible with the "necessities of service." As opposed to hours which are "flexible" at the employer's will, this formula can lead to: a) general assemblies of the service or plant in which individual preferences are made by the workers themselves; b) a permanent reflection on the "necessities of service," i.e., on the organization of work, the distribution of tasks and their possible distribution in the interest of each and all; c) a collective interest in the nature and effects of technological changes before they are introduced.

Finally, this self-management of time makes it possible to bring self-management discourse down from the heaven of ideas and projects to daily practice, on the basis of which the extension of the field of self-management can become a mobilizing objective combining individual immediate interest with collective interest — a plan of society with the desire to live and work differently.

# THE LIMITS OF SELF-DETERMINATION AND SELF-MANAGEMENT: AN INTERVIEW WITH ANDRÉ GORZ*

QUESTION: *"How can one determine the autonomy of an individual? How does one's autonomy express itself in relation to society?"*

GORZ: "A person is said to be autonomous, when he or she realizes a personal project, towards ends they have created, based on criteria of success that are not socially predetermined. The term "autonomous" comes from the Greek expression: *'he who* gives himself his own law.' The essence of autonomous behavior cannot be explained sociologically. Obviously, this behavior is expressed within a determined social field, with socially preconstituted instruments. But the field and instruments are surpassed and bent to serve personal goals as well as to fulfill a sense of personal adventure. This applies essentially to those we call 'creators,' be they artists, mathematicians, inventors, contractors, philosophers, or militants of new ways of life, of new educational models, and who are always breaking away from the norms and codes of their society. This is precisely what integrated societies or totalitarian states resent. Hence, they are

* This interview was conducted by Corpet, Gaudin, Grupp, and Mattei in December, 1981. It originally appeared in *Autogestion*, No. 8-9, 1982, pp. 187-203. Translated by Michele Joseph. This piece reflects the themes developed in *Farewell to the Working Class* (South End Press: Boston, 1983).

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treated as asocial and immoral individuals dangerous for the established order and persecuted. On an existentialist level, autonomy necessarily involves meaning that one is aware that one cannot share one's personal certainties with others or, conversely, that the ideals of a social individual are impossible to live with as one's own truths. In short, 'social' existence inevitably entails some sort of alienation, because society is not, and cannot be, a product of each one of us, that we would recognize as a work we have all created in a free and willing togetherness. In Malraux's *Conquerants* a revolutionary, Garine, says: "I am asocial as well as an atheist." I love this definition because, indeed, the one who has faith believes that beyond his own thought, there is an absolute thought with which he tries desperately to associate his own. It is the same for people who conform to society's norms and to the values of their social background and regard society as an engulfing 'being' that thinks for them, and that holds a truth beyond their own reach. There is a certain religiosity in any attitude that proclaims that the individual must serve society and be an instrument of its integrity. These attitudes are always based on values of Good or Bad and these are considered non-tangible entities to which we must submit ourselves by conforming in a passive or competitive way. Conversely, he who feels he alone can judge his soul and conscience of the good and the truth, is asocial as well as an atheist. The latter considers that society's well of richness in tools and in space, should be at the disposition of people's internal blossoming."

QUESTION: *What makes some individuals more autonomous than others?"*

GORZ: "Above all, family background. There is a well-known research on the subject done by Kornhauser, in the U.S., which determines that individuals who lack autonomy and who have a respect for hierarchy, are often the same ones that do a repetitive kind of work which requires no initiative. But this obvious social definition clearly has its limits. First of all, you have those people who do repetitive work as specialized workers in order to earn money to realize personal goals. These people are particularly numerous in the U.S. where it is not uncommon to work in a factory or to do packaging and handling to pay for ones studies. Andre Swartz-Barth, in France, worked as an unskilled worker for Renault so as to be able to write *Last of the Just.* On the other hand, since Kornhauser published his research, we have seen the growth of the unskilled labor's revolution throughout the whole world — especially, among young workers. In this case, the social aspect does not explain much. There has been cultural mutation, i.e., a change in the perception of work, the worker's condition, and the notion of what used to be acceptable and what was not. Yet, this cultural rapport between individuals and their social sphere, is based primarily on the family background: it is a reaction against it, rather than conforming to it. The more complex a family background, the more difficult it is to abide to ones values, and thus a child feels condemned to autonomy. In order to reach this autonomy, the child will need cultural means again, which in our society only parents or those who replace them can provide. All in all, autonomous persons, particularly creators, artists, intellectuals and others, often come from families lacking or without paternal authority, and where someone else (of influence) had a taste for ideas, books, art or simply an open curious mind. In short, autonomous individuals are those in whom the process of socialization failed to work: the part of them that is not socialized wins over the one that is. Society, all societies, are to them a contingency, somewhat haphazard and more or less absurd, from which they feel removed. They are forever conscious that the norms and laws of society do not correspond to the very needs, morality and aesthetics, of people, and of relations between people. The alienation is insurmountable in any type of society."

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QUESTION: *"Do you think we can eliminate this alienation?"*
GORZ:"One can reduce it and limit its importance in time and space, but we cannot eliminate it completely. In fact, I think to claim to be able to eliminate it completely would only lead us to deny it, and this negation is the very essence of totalitarianism, particularly socialist totalitarianism. The latter, either way, always proclaims the following thought: that we are in the best of societies, that all men are equal and brothers, therefore, if you are not happy, or if you do not identify completely with your social function, you are a perverted individual, mean and nasty, criminal or crazy, or worse, an enemy of the people, paid by the Imperialists. Moreover, in any political regime, a society is to some extent a giant machine of which the sound functioning depends on the individuals' prompt responses to imperative techniques that bring forth no enthusiasm or gratification. In China, for example, one of these imperative requirements is to scatter the sewage from the latrines onto the fields. Faced with this necessity, we have two possible choices of attitude. One, that it is a tedious task that no one wants to be responsible for. Thus, the task is going to be shared by everyone in turn, so that each person spends the least amount of time doing it. But we can also (as it happened in China) start from the principle that the Common interest in the Victoriously Magnificent Workers' Revolution is such, that everyone identifies with the cause and hence sacrifice their own individual demands in order to serve society in the best possible way. Thus, one defines good citizens as a heroes of work, who happily sacrifice themselves to the Revolution, and who find their utmost satisfaction in dissipating sewage. This task is then presented no longer as tedious or unpleasant, but rather as a civic and moral duty. To be a good Citizen, one must enjoy spreading sewage. And since there are people such as intellectuals whom we have reason to believe do not enjoy this type of work, they will be the first assigned to this task, and will be asked, on top of it all, to sing its glory and to praise the headman who made them discover the joys of this type of shore. Up until now, all socialist regimes have institutionalized this sort of work religion and have claimed to deny its alienation in order to glorify it. There would have been no need to glorify work if it were truly self-fulfilling and gratifying. In fact we know work has not changed and that, whether the society is socialist or capitalist, once it has large units of production, it keeps its aspect of a giant machine where people are at the service of large material systems, instead of these systems being a service to the self-fulfillment of each and everyone.
QUESTION: *"By developing autonomous work, isn't your goal to precisely reorganize society materially, so as to destroy its aspect of a giant machine? Isn't the aim of destruction of everything that cannot be self-manageable, (because of the sheer dimension of its size) to rediscover autonomous work? In the idea of autonomous work, there is also the notion of return to an intelligible rapport between the needs of the individual and the group, and its production and exchange with others. How far can this sphere of autonomy go? And if there are insurmountable limits, what would the reasons be, economically, socially or politically, excluding history?"*
GORZ: "If I stress the point that all societies have an aspect of giant machines and contain within themselves a certain social alienation for individuals, it is so that in knowing this, we can try to minimize institutions or 'the tools' (in the sense of Illich) and all activities that imply and upkeep the workings of a giant machine. But we shall not be able to erase them completely because, in order for the sphere of autonomous activities not to have outside limits, the world would have to be made up exclusively of small enterprises independently run by willing associates, and these enterprises would have to be perfect little islands which would actually correspond to the stage of tribal societies, such as they existed not too long ago in the Amazon, totally isolated from one

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another. Autonomous production is essentially an artisan production, in which the individual or community group are in control of the means of production, the process of work and product, in their concept and their quality. Yet, the question here is not to go back to the spinning wheel, the water mill or to domestic and village economy, in order to meet all or most needs. Autonomic production, such as we picture it today, will build itself with a majority of specialized and sophisticated tools that can be mastered by each group or individually but that cannot be manufactured on a group or community scale. Microprocessors and peripheral types, for example, and even bicycles or the parts of a solar energy water kettle, require a division of labor on the level of a country, or even a continent. A fine and extremely evolved metallurgy is imperative, with optical instruments, soft chemistry, electro-chemistry, and ball-bearing factories with their special machinery. No one person or group can master all the technologies and the knowledge required to manufacture a bicycle or a little robot. Therefore, to use these instruments, there must be units of production and people specialized in the making and conception of parts and organs that do not have any value or use by themselves: e.g., parts of a memory, or bicycle chains. Thus, the mastery of the final product is missed. They produce in terms of a much larger whole of which their work brings no awareness. This work has limited aspects of autonomy, it can be intelligent, and pleasant, but it will not be an autonomous activity. It has as its direct target the market and not people with whom one relates. By this I mean that it will be rewarded in terms of its value in a Marxist sense: we exchange hours of work, and not for the value of use. For my hours of work, I am paid a salary which, if there were no exploitation, would permit me to buy those things which represent in value, the number of hours I have given in work. Marketable relations are not yet abolished, nor is salary alienation or the external determination of the nature and specificity of the products that I help manufacture. Socialism does not change this. At best, it can promote the workers' self-determination of their working conditions on a larger scale. Hence, the sphere of autonomy is still based on a sphere in which the production is heteronomously socialized. It is because of this efficiency and its productivity that we have instruments and time that permit a growth of autonomy, as well as a rich and diverse choice of activities. Without the field of social production and its division of labor, as well as relatively important and complex units of production, we would have to work mainly at producing basic necessities."

QUESTION: *"But what would be the nature of this work? Would it not be precisely more autonomous?"*

GORZ: "Yes and no. In peasant-artisan society, one was more autonomous in the sense that one was master of ones time-table, rhythm and method of work. But this autonomy was not lived as such, because one worked from dawn to dusk to earn ones subsistence, often with no margin of security. What is gratifying in today's autonomous activities, that are performed with fine technology, is that they are a rest from heteronomous activity, and they have a subversive creative characteristic: in a society where big market production dominates, you can isolate little islands that constitute alternative cultural and social models. If the latter predominated, if we were to follow the law of working mainly with fine technology, at the level of the household or community, we would not find it creative or gratifying."

QUESTION: *"In fact it would be a self-contradiction, because it would be a principle of centralization applied to an entity which in itself works against that principle."*

GORZ: "The State does not need to be centralized to put forth legal norms that restrain: it does so by being conformist, as is the case in China. If political authority

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states as a principle that the Good Citizen is the one who either in the family or the small cooperative, produces his own clothes, his own vegetables, builds his own receptor of solar energy, under moral and material threat, we would have a stuffy authoritarian society, repressive and ultra-conformist, even if the administrative centralization is not well developed, as it is in China. For me, autonomous activity is real only if it is neither an obligation, imposed on us in the name of moral, religious or political principles, nor a vital necessity. But for it not to be one or the other, subsistence has to be assured by means of a perfected productive social system that would give us what is essential to live on, and that would only ask of us a small fraction of our time."

QUESTION: *"Still there is something disturbing in this model, because the more we reduce the type of work needed for the production of necessities, the more important the super-productive sector becomes. It becomes the center of attention, since it must play 'mother' to all others. Its productivist values can jeopardize the rest of social functioning."*

GORZ: "But no, that is not how things actually occur. The wish for a high level of productivity does not always imply the enterprise of productivity. One is production oriented when one says: one must always produce faster, produce more, because more is better. But when one says one has to produce the maximum in a minimum amount of time, so that everyone can have a lot of time to do what they want we are not 'speaking' production. Because in this case, the aim is not to increase productivity, but to increase free time. Productivity is but a means of reaching that goal. And it depends on the research done to find more efficient types of tools and not on the glorification of effort. Anti-productivity must not bring along contempt of technique and rationality. In fact, if we look at progress in the most advanced countries, in North America, for example, we see that the rise in 'machine' productivity brings with it a cultural mutation: free time tends to become more important than work. The value of the use of free time (what one can do oneself) is more important than the value of its exchange (what one gets by selling one's time). This evolution is obviously more evident among people that are relatively more learned, and this is so, not because of higher income, but because they are culturally more autonomous. They are capable and have the desire to occupy themselves, which is not the case, to the same degree, among people who have always done repetitive work, for more than 48 hours a week. Yet, the mutation is there. Cultural change always starts among the more educated strata of society. It will spread quickly as soon as a politics for time enables everyone to occupy themselves in their free time, in a creative or gratifying way."

QUESTION: *"Which is not yet the case in the U.S. Nothing indicates that the ideology of 'work' is in question. On the contrary, this form of drastic time reduction in work has put 10% of the active population on unemployment, and not necessarily lead to an aversion to work, but rather to a new return to traditional norms."*

GORZ: "The fact is that industrial society is trying its best to hide the fact that the social need for work is declining rapidly, and that everyone could benefit from it. So, instead of proposing more free time for those who want it, the choice is that of full-time work or full-time unemployment, which is a way of showing up free time as a calamity, or a social death. Moreover, except in Scandinavian countries, unemployed people, retired people, and those who have retired before their time, are forbidden to be self-productive, because by producing for their own needs and for those of people around them, they would be reducing the market's outlets. Faced with the alternative: full-time employment or unemployment, people prefer "employment." This does not mean that they continue to adhere to the traditional 'value' attached to work. On

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the contrary, as one sees in the U.S. and Northern Europe, and as describe in Guy Aznar's research in his book *All Part-Time,* the demand for free time is very high but unsatisfied, this being most important among active people who accord more value to their autonomous work than to their work for payment. The cultural mutation is there, but society is still preventing it from emerging, socially and politically. That is why I am saying that there has to be a political struggle in order for society to give people the right and the material opportunity to give as much importance to autonomous work as is given to work that is socially predetermined, that is done in exchange for a wage. In any case, the evolution of technology has abolished a great number of working jobs, and leaves society faced either with an unemployed society, very unequal and still oriented towards productivity, or with a society of free time, where self-determined and non-marketable activities can be more important than work for pay in everyone's life. Alvin Toffler, in *The Third Wave* has shown very clearly how the micro-electronic revolution can potentially lead to a civilization in which economic goals, market production, and money exchange, could become secondary. This objective possibility obviously can only be realized if it is backed by a political will. Why should it not emerge? We live in an astonishingly schizophrenic way. Our social relations are controlled by the idea of equal exchange, but this idea, so true to capitalism and socialism, is absent from the existentialist experience. In our personal and affectionate relations, it is never a question of having an equal exchange but, rather, to always give more than one receives. Friendships, love relations and affectionate and tender relations, are based on the desire of each one wanting to give the maximum to the other. All that would literally imply a competitive will to always give more. It is like in Primitive societies, where there is competition in being generous. Economical goals and market values are absent at this level."

QUESTION: *"But in all real exchange, one feels nevertheless that there is a mutual interest, both partners gain something from it."*

GORZ: "As soon as one thinks of interest it is over! If I have an interest in loving you, I am not loving you."

QUESTION: *"Granted, but to leap from a relation between two, or three, or four people to social relations, at the level of society, is difficult. The example you give of love relations or of Primitive society are not easily transferable to the scale of a large society."*

GORZ: "That is what I am saying. In our types of societies, social relations are cold, codified, legal and mechanical, in which no one invests themselves and that is why there is a chasm between personal existence and social existence. Hence, today's search for new forms of social warmth, free of economic finalities."

QUESTION: *"But even if the spontaneous or autonomous relations between individuals are different from social relations, we have to recognize that they are nevertheless necessarily codified or imposed by external rules."*

GORZ: "That is what happens. During the 70's, in the U.S. there was an intense reflectivity going on in the communal districts about what size group was compatible to warm relations. The definition for this kind of group came about from a Californian movement, which is that the group ceased to contain initiative and reciprocity between its members, as soon as it was no longer possible to communicate with all others in a conversational tone. When one speaks to all in a tone of discourse or of a speech, the relations of reciprocity and of spontaneous exchange, are superceeded by a system in which the problems of hierarchy, domination and rivalry are directly involved. At the end of the 60's and beginning 70's, there had been, almost everywhere, animated discussions between those who favored the power of the Assemblies, and those who

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favored organization. The first group was hostile to all delegations for the mass' capacity for intiative and rejection of hierarchy. The second group was showing how, in reality, the apparent spontaneity of Assemblies left an open invitation to the power of a certain type of charismatic leader, who would take power and keep it by absolutely undemocratic measures: intimidation, blackmail, and terror. This has occured. In communities that are larger than small intimate groups, the freedom and equality of its members exists only if the functioning of the community is controlled by rules and procedures that apply to all,and that we call the Law."

QUESTION: *"But who will elaborate that Law, and impose it?"*

GORZ: "In practice, Law is in most cases elaborated by specialized sub-groups, or 'committees' that are made responsible for that work by the community's General Assembly. That is what happened at LIP, where it worked very well. Parties are supposed to function along the same lines, but that is rarely the case, especially because of the influence election work and governmental work have on them. Thus, theoretically, society is the only source from which Law can spring, the fabric of real and live social relations."

QUESTION: *"In your book* "Farewell to the Proletariat,*" you distinguish two spheres: autonomy, and what you have defined as the field of warm and friendly relations, and the field of heteronomy, that you have just termed as the field of cold social relations, codified in terms of the necessities of a collective functioning, that surpass, by their very dimensions, the perspectives of individual partners. You ask that functional necessities be codified within rules of Law for which the State, in your eyes, is or should be the guarantor. At the same time, you want the field of heteronomy and the State to be limited to a minimum. But how can a State be minimized and at the same time have a decisive effect on society? In a self-management perspective, must we not analyse the State as the 'superior' social form that bends all other forms to submission?"*

GORZ: "There are two very different problems. First of all, the dimensions of the State depend on that of the sphere of heteronomy which, in itself, depends on the material structure of the territorial collectivity. The heavier the technology and concentration of technique and economics in production, the more society's functioning is like that of a great factory machine. The latter can only be controlled by a semi-military organization. Self-management of the economic machine is inconceivable. Self-management of the S.N.C.F. makes no sense. Both of these have a form and a mode of functioning that is of the State, e.g., bureaucracy or military types. We could reduce transport to the communal production departments. But there is a limit: railroad tracks must also be territorial as well as local. Therefore, the possibility of minimizing the State depends on the reduction and decentralization of technical and economic units. Obviously, the State has no interest in this because it would limit its power. But the civilian society and the population have an interest in it. Yet, they had better not overthrow the State because there is yet a function that is not compressable that must emerge from it, not only materially but also legally. In France, the more one is 'leftist,' the more one is against the State. This is not true everywhere. The French State is an entity that has always been there, and that has always crushed civilian society more so than protected it. Whereas in Italy or the U.S. and especially in Germany, it is the lack of a 'State' that has been an obstacle to the growth of the civil society, in that it permitted the power of 'princes' to perpetuate itself and to escape the rules of Law. Thus, in German philosophy, the State was the prerequisite of a law that shirked both individuals and civil society and was biased to the overbearing prince. Hence, we must envisage the State as being essentially the instrument and keeper of the Law but not as its source. Its source must always lie within social relations."

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QUESTION: *"So you distinguish, on the one hand, civil society, and on the other, the State, and somewhere in between lies Politics, which you say controls those links. But on a practical level, what is this political authority like?"*

GORZ: "It is such that we no longer dare call parties 'parties,' because they function so badly nowadays. In fact, parties should be associations of conscious citizens, simply because the requirements for a maximal self-management of individuals and communities can only be met if they are translated into political terms: City Organization, the functioning of civil society and codification by Law, which cannot come forth from the supremacy of individuals and communities. In short, politics is taken over by militants who enjoy and know how to think about the stakes involved in conflicts apparent in society, in terms of Law and Organization."

QUESTION: *"These militants are very much like intellectual professionals who speak in the name of Power, or monopolize it. How are we to perceive their relation with civil society?"*

GORZ: "They formulate and translate the rising aspirations of civil society and they try to render them coherent, workable, and suitable to the functioning of one or several social systems. As a rule, any party is a ground of elaboration and confrontation, where everything is debated openly, under the control of all those who do want to control, with the possibility of dismissing, regularly, those people who do not convey realistic aspirations, or who do not convey them well."

QUESTION: *"But there is no example of parties functioning the way you describe."*

GORZ: "That is what I was saying in the beginning. The functioning of parties is perverted because the Sate eats away at society. Today's parties, whichever they might be, function in order to transmit the will of the State to citizens, and not the reverse. The Socialist Party is the transmitting pole for the President of the Republic and for the government's messages, with just the right number of failures that still goes unnoticed. It does not elaborate, nor translate, anything. The only groups of citizens that still function in a fashion that parties should function, are reflection groups, clubs, small-sized militant groups, syndicates, and others....Politics is dwindling."

QUESTION: *"But the aim of self-management is fundamentally 'anti-state' and thus not compatible with the maintenance of an arbitrary political authority. In fact, does your concept not lead to a radical revision of the aim of self-management?"*

GORZ: "The aim of self-management is an aspiration, and not a coherent and workable global conception of the nature and functioning of society. Self-management is possible only on the scale of a community containing no less than a couple of hundred people. But then who controls relations between these self-managed communities? And who controls the 'system of relations' among all the different communities that make a whole country? And the relations between these systems of relations who controls them? We can either answer: 'nobody,' or we can abandon these relations and turn to 'market forces' which are in reality 'power struggles.' And if we try to civilize or regulate these relations, by rules known to all and that magnify the sphere of autonomy, then there is a need for a Law apparatus, a State. There is no third way. Self-management is an aspiration of which the sphere can be extensive, but it is not a solution for everything. I do not feel like constantly dealing with all the problems linked to a global functioning of society, problems involving international exchange, transport and communication networks, money exchange and the police....I consider that everyone should be free from having to concern themselves with all of this in a permanent way."

QUESTION: *"Which implies, of course, that we fall back on the professional class."*

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GORZ: "I have nothing against professionals. They will always be there. There will always be surgeons, for example. The question is how to prevent them from being a class or a caste, i.e., by doing nothing else but exercising and monopolizing their skills, and using them as a source of power. Obviously, there will always be people in a field or another, who will know far more than others. It takes at least ten years to be a good agronomist or chemist, and again, they will only be mastering a small portion of agronomy or chemistry. The same goes for geologists, mechanics, judges, managers, and so on....Everyone cannot be everything and anything unless, of course, one goes back to neolithic technology, and even then....The solution lies in reducing the time spent working for society. No one should practice their profession for more than four hours a day, on the average. Hence, there will be more people with greater knowledge and public responsibility. As for the rest of the time, they will be equal members, without any privileges, people who will potter, garden, teach, learn, take care of children, and cook (somewhat like what happens in some *Kibbutzim*), and they will not be taken for 'gods' and will not think they are either....It is not specialization or professionalism that stops liberalization but, rather, status and privileged powers that in our society are associated to certain types of professions. We can abolish stratifications and hierarchies, without abolishing specialization and the division of labor."

# FRENCH FOREIGN POLICY: AN INTERVIEW WITH PIERRE HASSNER AND PATRICK VIVERET*

## by Dick Howard

HOWARD: Why Marxism and Socialism have never been able to deal with "foreign policy?" Better yet: what would a "democratic" foreign policy look like? And what would "democratic" mean? If we say "Socialist" it could refer to the content of some program, or to support for some liberation movement. However, a "democratic policy," on the other hand, is unclear unless it means the devlopment of democracy abroad as well as at home. During the debate between the two of you,[1] you showed some disagreements about this. Viveret said that he hoped that the French Socialist Party will show more imagination in this area than it has in domestic policy. Maybe we could approach this in term sof Mitterrand's election. For a long time the Soviets have supported the Right, and Mitterrand's foreign policy seems to justify this Soviet preference. With the exception of the pipeline affair and his policy in Latin America, he seems to have followed almost a Reaganite foreign policy.

VIVERET: As many people have already observed Mitterrand's foreign policy has

* Translated by John Mason with Eva Vink.

1. See Patrick Viveret, "Peace and Liberty," and Pierre Hassner, "Defense, Human Rights and Detente: A Dialogue with Viveret," in *Telos*, No. 51 (Spring 1982) pp. 101-115.

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been both more "Atlanticist," and more "Third World" oriented than that of his predecessors. In this sense, he has demonstrated some originality. It is not clear, however, that this new course has gone very far, since it has been implemented more through the juxtaposition of policies, than by a real shift. Now, I have two comments to make about how the debate over foreign policy played a role in the electoral campaign between Mitterrand and Giscard. First of all, it is obvious that, as in most French presidential campaigns, economic and domestic policy issues played a determining role. On the one hand, as Mitterrand emphasized, the general problem of "security" is a salient issue in domestic politics. Paradoxically, it was Mitterrand who raised the question of "security" with his campaign slogan of "la force tranquille," (quiet strength), and with the visual impact of his campaign posters which showed him standing against background shots of rural villages. This appealed to voters as a call for a return to rural roots as opposed to the kind of Parisian "modernism" personified by Giscard.

Throughout the campaign, the slogan had a double meaning. In theory, we were faced with a very radical "Left/Right" confrontation. After all, the offical platform of the Socialist Party made constant references to a break with capitalism. Yet, there was figure of Mitterrand himself who, in some respects, inherited a general quest for security in all industrial societies, and which also led to the election of people like Reagan and Thatcher.

Mitterrand also played with international issues, in a way which was both clever and effective, by using his criticism of Giscard's policy toward Afghanistan, and Mitterrand's much publicized description of him as the "little telegraph operator," to expose the extraordinary fragility of Giscard's personality and make him appear less than a real statesman. The label "little telegraph operator" was Mitterrand's way of describing Giscard's decision to meet Brezhnev after the Afghan invasion, at a time when the rest of the Western world was boycotting the USSR. Giscard met Brezhnev in Poland and was unable to obtain anything serious in return for his major concession of agreeing to such a meeting. Mitterrand criticized this in a clever and contemptuous manner by calling Giscard the "little telegraph-operator" after Giscard attempted to explain that his Brezhnev meeting sent the Russians a message from the entire western bloc. I believe that Mitterrand reassured a whole sector of French public opinion by squarely confronting the Soviet military build-up and, more specifically, the implications of the deployment of the SS-20's. On another occasion he took on his own party, during a convention at the time of the botched the American rescue mission to Tehran. Mitterrand took the podium after various speakers had condemned the Carter's adventurism and the American military operation and said that he sympathized with Carter's decision and that, if he had been President of the French Republic under similar circumstances, he would have assumed responsibility for the same order. By doing this, he took a minimal risk. He did not really put his authority in question within the party, while at the same time on the outside, he showed himself a real man of action who was ready to take necessary risks, unaffected by the dogmatic, Left-wing activists within his own party. Mitterrand cleverly manipulated all these themes, and left Giscard standing flat-footed.

HOWARD: France has always had "privileged" relations with African countries. If Mitterrand was serious about undertaking something new in foreign policy, the African arena is where he had the greatest room for manuever. Yet, there really has not been much movement and there is even less room for change now since Jean-Pierre Cot has resigned — Cot was in many people's opinion the one member of the government who was the most open to change in France's African policy.

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HASSNER: On this point, I would say that Mitterrand's attitude towards the whole of the Third World beyond Africa also needs to be discussed. When you said that Mitterrand has shown himself to be essentially pro-American and that the Russians were right to prefer the candidates of Right to him, you overlooked the fact that, on a certain number of issues (Nicaragua, El Salvador, American cultural imperialism) France has recently opposed the U.S. On a more general level, one should recognize the contrast between French policy on East-West issues, where it expresses a more anti--Soviet attitude than it did under Giscard, and North-South issues where it is more resolutely opposed to American imperialism than previously and the policy has adopted a Third World type of discourse. But, as you said, there remains the question of Africa and, as Julliard has pointed out, Mitterrand has generally returned to De Gaulle's policy. Generally, however, Mitterrand makes a promise to the Third-World which should not be underestimated. He pledges himself to oppose the hegemony of the two superpowers; to improve relations with Algeria and a certain number of other Third World countries. Mitterrand aims his policy specifically at Algeria, Mexico and India — countries targeted as the pillars of a new French policy toward the Third World. Yet, along side all this, and perhaps disguised by it, there is a neo-colonialist approach towards our own *backyard*, i.e., Africa, South Africa and so on. Giscard failed to maintain this duality in his foreign policy; i.e., of opposition to American imperialism, which masks the fact that, where France's immediate interests are threatened, there reappears the classical policy of *Realpolitik*, based on the existing network of French client states in Black Africa, and reflects French economic stake in South Africa. We must always remember this duality in Mitterrand's approach toward the Third World, and especially *vis à vis* Africa. His African policy is basically the same as Giscard's with the reservation that under Mitterrand we have had no scandals like Emperor Bokassa's diamonds. For other regions of the world, however, this is not true.

HOWARD: This leads me back to the previously mentioned debate, because here, again, Viveret defended the position that foreign policy is ultimately based on national interests, on power balances between different countries, while Hassner reproached Viveret for being too idealistic...

VIVERET: First of all, let me object to your characterization of our discussion in such simplified terms as a debate between idealism and realism, whether we are discussing the general issues between Pierre or myself or the particular case of Jean-Pierre Cot's resignation. For example, Cot has correctly claimed that in many respects the African policy of the Mitterrand administration implemented by his advisors, notably Guy Penne, is in many ways an unrealistic short-term policy. This policy seeks to prolong a status quo based on a "special relation" with African heads of state whose extraordinary political instability is well known or in the case of the eventual sale of a second nuclear power plant to South Africa, consist of a policy which favors the protection of immediate economic interests over a political analysis which takes into account the long term evolution of the region as a whole. One can very easily show, in view of these considerations, that the current policy is not very "realistic." The day South Africa explodes (and it is hard to imagine that over the next ten to fifteen years South Africa will not be somehow shaken up) the genuine realists will turn out to be those who sought a diversification of their political and economic interests in the region. Now, more broadly, concerning the question you asked about the larger problem of a "democratic policy," I am not so naive as to doubt that today international relations are characterized by what Hoffman called in his latest book, *Le Moral pour les Monstres Froids*, or to question that they still remain, in many respects, in a state of nature com-

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pared with the conditions of civilization which have been established within those very states. On the contrary, we are in a situation where nuclear war makes possible, for the first time in history, the self-destruction of a significant part of mankind. In this situation, the question raised by Hobbes' political philosophy takes on a new significance: how does a community establish the rule of law under the pressure of a greater threat such as the threat to its survival? According to Hobbes this kind of threat permits the constitution of internal rule within a society, then a city, and finally a state, to avoid the war of all against all within this community. The nuclear threat may be a positive force in that it obliges humanity to move beyond the state of nature, and the war of all against all at the level of states for reasons of simple survival. Secondly, all the efforts of the international community since World War I, contradictory and limited as they may be, were a progressive attempt to reject the absolute separation between rights which apply *within* democratic states, and the rules of pure force that apply to the relations *between* states. These efforts recognized that the existing situation was untenable and extremely dangerous for humanity in the long run — not to speak of the problem it poses for democracy itself. In other words, "what does a pure logic of power relations mean for the organization of relations between states?" Look at this problem, which I believe is absolutely fundamental, from the democratic viewpoint. I came to the conclusion that democracies can not accept this absolute schizophrenia between the extension of their domestic democracy, and the acceptance of non-democratic criteria for international politics over the long run. I do not claim that we follow an "all or nothing" approach and I am aware that if we did, we could easily end up repeating Carter's failures: those of a policy which was motivated by good intentions but which in the end was counter-productive even for democracy. I do not see any political history which is not marked by this tension between the *de facto* situation, which cannot be ignored and must be managed, and the dimension of objectives which is absolutely necessary, unless one accepts a radically pessimistic vision of society's evolution. I think it is worthwhile to question the existing criteria of international politics, as hard as that may be, in terms of a framework of democratic principles. Any progress in this direction is a gain. I do not believe that this type of contradiction will be resolved even in the next few generations. The problem of the constitution of the international community as a community regulated, at least partially, by the rule of law will probably take as much time, if not more, than the constitution of the city-states at the dawn of our era, or of the nation-states between the 18th and the 19th centuries. But that seems to be a fundamental line development which we should try to encourage.

HOWARD: Take for example, the Middle East, where France has a long tradition and where it is still strongly involved. Can one try to examine what is being done and what must be done there?

HASSNER: Yes, in the case of Africa, there are two forces at work, of which Cot was perfectly aware. There are relations that emerge from the historical priorities of the French neo-colonialist heritage and there are the constraints of domestic priorities which effect all governments facing the international economic crisis: jobs, for example, are very much at stake in this affair of the second nuclear reactor for South Africa. But while everyone, including Debray, seems to have bowed to domestic economic pressures, we must try, (otherwise it is meaningless to be socialists) to free France from the network of African clients developed by the fifth Republic. I am completely opposed to the idea of continuing to give another color television to Bongo. Thus, as far as this is concerned, I am with Cot against Mitterrand. Secondly, the most serious problem (and in the past this was a problem that the Rocardian group raised con-

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stantly) is the articulation East/West issues against North/South issues and the problem of short-term versus long-term policy perspective. Let us imagine that we more or less know which regimes are progressive or reactionnary, and that we can all agree that Saudi Arabia, Turkey or Pakistan are regimes condemned by morality, history, and democracy: the question still remains of whether they will be replaced by a Quaddafi, a Castro, or a Khomeni. Does this not create difficulties in terms of East/West relations, or in terms of oil supplies? Secondly, even if in the long run these regimes are consigned to the dustbin of history, what must we do now? Should they be supported in the short run, while one encourages them to undertake long term reforms? There socialists always succumb to the temptation of resolving the problem rhetorically by claiming that the real foundation of all that are the errors of the capitalist past. Inequalities in the North and the South relation, will all be worked out the day that we change the distribution of benefits between North and South. I agree with this, but I believe that some Socialist government official is telling himself, "Well, nice, but, while we are waiting for development to happen everywhere on the globe, what do I do about this or that issue?" There, I do not have a ready answer, and I do not blame Mitterrand for posing this question. Consider two countries; where France is not immediately involved, but where the U.S. has had a long relation: Pakistan and Turkey. These are two abominable regimes: Pakistan is a murderous regime, reactionary in every sense of the word. But, if one wants to aid Afghanistan, if one wants to block Soviet supremacy in the region, one is obliged, despite this, to help Pakistan. Turkey is the same. One the one hand, Reagan is right when he claims that Turkey has been the object of a massive program of terrorist destabilization inspired by the Russians. Yet, I know that internal repression in Turkey is ten times worse than in Poland, if one counts the number of people arrested, the number of people tortured, the number of people sentenced to death, etc. Even so, Turkey still occupies an extremely important strategic position,...In the same way, the Shah of Iran was an awful figure, but his fall has made the verification of the SALT agreements much more difficult. These complexities remain. All I can say is that there does not seem to be any easy solution. The French Socialist government has entered into a world determined by the logic of competition between East and West, North and South. Socialists must seek to insert their own priorities into a world whose structure is alien or even repugnant to them, and this attempt on their part is what makes them different from the reactionary government they replaced. As for the nuclear question, one must distinguish two viewpoints. One could say, with traditional Left-wing pacifists such as the American "ban the bomb" people, "Either World Government now, or the Planet blows!" Even someone like Hans Morgenthau agreed with them that the development of nuclear weapons had made the notion of national interest obsolete, and that one had to change everything. One could agree with this in the long run, but the question remains of how are we going to get there? On the other hand, we need to know whether the nuclear issue does not simply imply that, beyond the established games of power politics between states, (which not only continue, but are reinforced by the logic of nuclear arms enhancing the power of the state,) there is an obligation for us to act from a planetary view, to promote non-proliferation, arms control, and the modification of the natural anarchy of the international system. Thus, there are two positions: one 'revolutionary' which says that the atomic bomb has sentenced the nation state to disappear; and a second which says "we do not know how to leave behind the nation state; the notion of the balance of power, and the notion of deterrence, but the common danger obliges us to become aware of our common interest in the necessity of mutual negotiations."

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What remains unresolved between the French and American governments, is whether notions of balance and deterrence are still meaningful. There is a tendency among the non-French Left to throw this nation overboard, and among the French Left to completely depend on it and to say, "Deterrence exists and this is the best of all possible worlds." Finally, there is the question of how to go beyond nuclear deterrence. What would a Left-wing, or Socialist, or democratic policy look like? Well, while these three terms over-lap, they do not necessarily mean the same thing. Picking up on an old American debate, what should one say about the objectives of such a policy? Do they imply that one should encourage the spread of democracy throughout the world, i.e., "*make the world safe for democracy*," or does it mean that one should seek to preserve the islands of democracy which already exist? So, one could envision a version of democratic foreign policy which is universalist in intent and imperial in scope, or a version which is isolationist and gives primacy to domestic reform: a kind of "socialism in one country" approach. Secondly, there is the question of means. What is a democratic foreign policy? Is it a policy which foregoes evil policy instruments, such as deception, assassination and war? Or is it a policy which is defined democratically through public discussion? These questions raise further problems which we cannot answer immediately. But up to now all political philosophers have recognized a distinction between foreign policy and domestic policy; they have understood foreign policy as the privileged domain of maneuver and secrecy, and that it was very difficult to formulate a workable foreign policy through democratic deliberation. Here I return to my starting point: the question of the structure of the international environment. Basically, there are three conceptions of international relations which we encounter as frequently in universities as we do in political circles: there is the classical vision of Hans Morgenthau, De Gaulle, and to push it to the extreme, of fascism as well, in which each state has its internal order based on the rule of law, but face each other in the outside world of anarchy where nothing counts but the rule of force, and of self-interest. In this vision, we are united internally around a political consensus, even if we disagree from time to time, while in the world outside there are no permanent alliances, but only permanent rivalries between the competing nation-states. Secondly, there is the vision which tries to assimilate the inside and the outside, which is a little bit what Viveret is suggesting. This is the vision of liberalism, either in a juridical version which tries to create an international organization equivalent to a parliament, such as League of Nations or the U.N., powerful enough to substitute collective security for self-protection, or the regional economic version like that of Jean Monnet, which seeks to limit the liberty of action of the nation-states by creating the maximum number of sub-national, anti-national and supra-national links in order to contain the nation-states within an economic and administrative network in which they would no longer have the freedom to continue their old power games. The third conception which claims that the existing system is not really organized around nations or states, but around classes, and the class struggle on the world scale. The two other conceptions treat states as though they were equivalent to one another, but in the third, one insists on the presence of central division between the dominated and the dominant groups, and what counts is the struggles of the peoples against the international enemy, against the central imperialism. The non-communist Left is still very ill at ease with all of this, because we make a kind of confused cocktail out of the three. What one finds is something like Viveret has been saying: that one must try to introduce a notion of "rights," and "collective security," into the discussion of international relations, and a discourse of national responsibility — a discourse built around the defense of the interests of a

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particular state. Here, one could cite Mauroy's immortal comment: "We are not in power to add a French heating crisis to the tragedy of colonial peoples. We were not elected to serve the colonial people, but to assure the military and economic security of the people who voted for us." And thirdly, there is a little bit of the sentimental feelings that we are on the side of the oppressed, the poor against the rich, the people against the governments everywhere around the world. What can we do with these three languages? We seem to be trying to insert democratic socialist values into international relations, i.e., we are trying to reach out beyond this state structure, which is determined by the convergence of interests and rivalry, to individuals and to peoples to create cross-national solidarity. But, even so, we must play out our hand within and through these structures which we did not create, and within the intercises between them. At this time, this amounts to a social democratic policy — a policy of world-wide redistribution. In the same way as it was necessary to create a welfare state within societies, we need to create the same thing for underdeveloped countries, to assure a kind of social security and redistribution through progressive taxation. All these ideas are, perhaps, good ones, and have the support of the social-democrats or other elements of the non-communist Left, but they pre-suppose all the same that we can overcome self-interested competition between states, and there is some kind of common interest which exists on a world scale — a notion which contradicts the dualist vision of a polarized struggle between the revolutionaries and the imperialists.

VIVERET: There is another point I should add here which, by the way, does not contradict what Hassner said. Despite everything, there is an internationalization of a certain number of phenomena which have escaped state control. Now I do not say this in order to mimimalize the radical problem of the state system, and I think that we are very far from resolving the question of how to reduce the importance of the actual existing nation-state, or of how to move in the direction of a world government, if that is possible or even desirable. But, in fact, we are living in an economic situation where the internationalization, world-unification of economic developments has become a reality. By the way, one of the major causes of the current economic crisis is the absence of effective regulatory mechanisms at the world level in a period which has seen economic internationalization advance to the point where a number of countries have been pushed to the brink of bankrupcy by the international competitive war. Today, this is the situation of Mexico, Brazil, Turkey and Poland. We have come to a point where a role reversal is required to maintain the international economic system: instead of these relations of dog-eat-dog competition, we see the deployment of drastic efforts to save the countries that are going under, not out of a feeling of altruism, (which is rare among bankers) but because the internationalization of the world economy is such that, as Anthony Sampson says in his book *Bankers in a Dangerous World*, the integrity of the international monetary chain depends on the strength of the weakest link. Gradually, there is the growth of the means for real international pressure, which goes beyond those possessed by the states. This allows us to move toward a politics which would have modest objectives as far as the nation-state is concerned. These would consist less of applying real democratic policy toward them, than of reducing the threshold of violence within the existing situation and especially of what we might call irrational violence. i.e., violence whose absolute necessity cannot be clearly demonstrated. We should assign a greater importance to the kinds of pressure that can be brought to bear through the internationalization of economic relations; or which can be played out on the field of society, and of cultural relations. One of the things which has always struck me, and here we come back to one of the important points in

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this debate, is a new phenomenon which has come about since the rise of communism. The traditional duality which allowed communities to constitute themselves in terms of a defense of an internal interest against an outside threat has been complemented by the threat to democratic processes by an outside totalitarian menace. With this modification the question of the community of interest and the manner in which it should be defended, is changed. It has not changed radically, i.e., the question of the state, of state rivalery, and the law of the jungle between states remains on the agenda, but it is displaced, and displaced enough to allow an intervention of other forces besides those of the state. I am thinking here, for example, of parties, trade-unions, and public opinion. I am thinking of the ways in which the laws of the market can be used as an international means of intervention. In some sense, this opens a new space for the nation-states, even if they move very hesitantly in this democratic direction.

HOWARD: Hassner concluded his comments on a note of support for the SPD viewpoint, while Viveret's position seemed rather more representative of a "Mediterranean Socialism." Viveret was suggesting that France was threatened as a democracy, and that this democracy had to react to this threat, i.e., that France is threatened with being "Finlandized" by the Russians on the one hand, and that France has to react with concrete policies not only toward Poland and Eastern Europe, but also toward countries in the Third World. So what has France done, and what can it do?

HASSNER: As with the conflict between Cot and Mitterrand, there is some truth to what you say when you compare my position to that of the SPD, and Viveret to that of "Mediterranean Socialists." Or, we could say that Viveret comes from the Left current within Socialism, while I come from the Right. So your description feels right to me from that perspective. Otherwise, one might say almost the opposite: on the one hand, Social Democracy, if it means anything at all, it means that non-state forces have real power: the unions and so on. On the other hand, in terms of what you were suggesting about the Socialist movement, almost the only example I can think of which corresponds to the kind of policy you proposed is precisely that of the SPD which as a party helped create Mediterranean Socialist parties in Spain and Portugal, and is active in Latin America and elsewhere in the Third World. However, if there is a disagreement between us, it is that today the "Northern-European social-democrats" are more anti-nuclear and have more sympathy for pacificism than the French Socialist Party, and that the people who are in favor of the Euro-missiles are Mitterrand, Craxi and Suarez: the Mediterranean Socialists. This is the case partly because of domestic politics having to do with their relations with their domestic Communist parties, and partly for reasons of nuclear policy which we should come back to. In addition, the differences between us here can be seen not only on the question of disarmament but also on North/South issues, on the question of the Third World. What seems to bring us together, however, in a way which is very important, is the question of the relation with the East concerning which we perfectly agree. I find that the specificity of the French Left, which characterizes everybody from the government to the parties of the French Left, is that last year the rest of the Left in Europe became much more involved with the issue of the nuclear missile deployment than we did, while in France the Left became much more excited over Poland than the Left elsewhere. So, it seems to be that the two big problems which could unify our approach, despite the different emphasis, are above all the nuclear question and the question of the totalitarian phenomena (and our attitude towards Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union). Now what is specifically French is, first of all, a much greater acceptance of nuclear deterrence than in other European countries; an acceptance, by the Left, in other words, of the military policy of the

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Fifth Republic in its most radical version. This is not true of the little Parisian intellectual circle to which Viveret belongs, and it is only partially true for me. I always find myself caught in these things. Secondly, and independently from this, there is in France the impact of Solzhenitsyn; of the discovery of totalitarianism, and of a intellectual revolution *vis à vis* the Soviet Union,while in Germany, the intellectual evolution seems to be exactly the opposite. Raised with Atlanticism and anti-Sovietism, the German Left is discovering anti-Americanism and detente. In France we follow the opposite track. Although I am not sure whether Viveret agrees with me, I think that the specificity of the intellectual climate on the Left in France flows from this conjuncture between two tendencies. On the one hand, there are people like Viveret, or Paul Thibaud, who would be basically pacifist or anti-nuclear, if it were not for the threat of totalitarianism, and the fear that they could become the unwilling instruments of the Soviet Union. On the other hand, there are other people like Chevènment, and the rest of the CERES, who are ultra-strong supporters of nuclear deterrence, but who are also anti-anti-communists and anti-American. They might otherwise enlist in the peace movement were it not for their attachment to the French national deterrence force. In short, there are people who are anti-totalitarian, and people who are pro-nuke. The two types are specifically French.

VIVERET: First of all, on the two questions raised by Hassner, I agree that this conjuncture is specific to French political life. My feeling about this, and I admit that my position is very much in the minority, is that the anti-war struggle which has mobilized the pacifist movement in Europe and in America appears to me substantially allied to the anti-totalitarian struggle, rather than in opposition to it. As far as I can see, the risk of nuclear war without even speaking of nuclear war itself, is an ideological resource for state organizations everywhere, and especially for the totalitarian states, because any civilian population which lives with the possibility that a nuclear war might actually happen has no other choice but to desire the protection its own national state can offer it. If we really wish to conduct an authentic anti-totalitarian struggle, (something that seems to me to be absolutely fundamental), i.e., a struggle that has as its goal something more than the preservation of the islands of democracy existing in the thirty or so countries where a minimum of pluralism is currently respected, it has to be a struggle which seeks to extend democracy beyond the territories where it is now established. This does not mean that one has to go off on a universal crusade, but I do believe that the minimal rights of pluralism and of free expression are not simply a matter of taste, or color, or that one can believe that there are people anywhere who have a authentic preference for dictatorship and torture over pluralism and free expression of opinion. A certain battle for the expansion of rights and for the extension of democracy is a necessity. This battle has a greater chance of being undertaken the more the risks of confrontation, and most especially the risks of a nuclear confrontation are reduced. Now, this raises an important point for our debate: the problem of deterrence. I have the feeling that the systems of deterrence are in crisis, and that they are becoming less and less credible. In a certain sense, the statement of Pierre Mauroy quoted by Hassner a little while ago illustrates this crisis. What does it mean for a foreign government if the French head of state is not willing to run the least risk over a question of heating fuel, when theoretically the essential characteristic of the French system of deterrence is that this same head of state is ready to run the fantastic risk of the probable vitrification of his country in response to a situation where he himself has already destroyed a number of Soviet cities, according to the existing scenario for deterrence *à la Française*? This, of course, in an incalculable risk for a head of state to

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run. So what is the credibility of the deterrence system of a country whose leadership is unwilling to risk anything over an affair one hundred times less important? That indicates to me to what degree in reality, and particularly in the French case where it involves a deterrence system which is still based on the deterrence of the stronger power by the weaker, and on an "anti-city" strategy, with all that implies in return for the country that takes these risks, deterrence is a system which only works when the level of tensions are never so high that one actually faces the problem of "*what must be done*." This leads to the prognosis that a system like the French system of defense is one which ends up by disarming us in a concrete confrontation. For example, imagine a hypothetical situation of military and political conflict in Europe; I find it hard to believe that the Russians are crazy enough to launch a tank attack across the Oder-Niesse frontier, rather than follow a political strategy of destabilization which would soften up Turkey or Greece, which would seek to "Finlandize" here, and seek to establish military protectorates there. I do not really see at what point we would be ready to run the fantastic risks implied by a deterrence policy organized along the French lines. I think it is more likely that we will find ourselves in a situation where, at the point where theoretically we are supposed to say "Watch out! You are forcing us to put our nuclear forces on alert and readiness." In the end, we would not carry through on the threat and, having failed to do so, find ourselves completely disarmed. This result corresponds completely with the preference already expressed by the majority of French public opinion in surveys done over the years: the majority expressed both support for the French nuclear forces, and at the same time, opposition to the idea that it ever be used, or that its use would even be ever threatened. This shows how far we have gone toward an attitude of collaboration and "Finlandization."

HASSNER: Let us try to distinguish two points: first of all, what we think about the nuclear issue. I would say simply that in large part I am in agreement with Vireret's critique of the French defense position, which is one of "all or nothing," of putting all our eggs in the deterrence basket. This amounts to a policy of bluff, and is the first bluff in history, furthermore, where one says straight forwardly that one is bluffing. Jean Poiret said the other day we must do nothing to preprare for the possibility that deterrence might fail: if it fails we must not have either civil defense or effective shelters. However, I still would not say that deterrence is completely worthless, because the risks are so enormous that the advisory must say to himself, "there is one chance in a thousand that these guys are not really bluffing. Even if they have the intention of bluffing, in the crunch, in a fit of craziness or anger, they might decide to go ahead with it." So I cannot say that it is completely worthless. But even so, it is utter madness to have a policy that depends on this kind of bluff alone. I expressed my own position to my own satisfaction during last year's debate. But, let me repeat: the nuclear opinion can only be the ultimate recourse. Along with it, we must have as large a conventional force as we can possibly afford, and leave the possible destruction of enemy cities as a last ditch threat. This having been said, the nuclear possibility remains part of the necessary range of policy choices we cannot abandon, and it seems to me to have a positive function for the conservation of the balance of power within Europe. This is one point on which there is a nuance of difference between Viveret and myself. I believe that it is the pacificist movement which is bringing the risk of nuclear war closer. If we built a de-nuclearized Europe, this might lead the Russians to an illusory belief that they can use their massive conventional superiority in a limited European war without running the risk of nuclear arms being used in retaliation. This is the kind of situation that might lead to a real war because the Americans would eventually inter-

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vene with their nuclear weapons. This scenario is made less likely as long as nuclear weapons exist, avoiding necessarily the high probability of their use in wartime, even if no one desires it, simply because to use them will result in their capture by the advancing enemy; "use them or lose them." To return to Mauroy, there again I am largely in agreement with Viveret. I would simply add that I am a little more discouraged or skeptical than he is. I think that it is paradoxical that he should use the statement of Mauroy about the heating problem to raise the problem of deterrence for two reasons: first of all, because the French government would reply that the risks one runs for oneself and the risks that one runs for others are very different in character. The essence of nuclear deterrence is the idea of the scorpion in the bottle who is sure to sting you by reflex, even if he is already dead. It is an ultimate measure that can only be used once, and only if the very existence of the nation has been put into question. The French doctrine specifically declares that we can not protect others with our weapons, but only defer ourselves *ad extremis*. Although Giscard slipped dangerously in the direction of a notion of the "enlarged sanctuary," this has been reversed under the Socialists. We now say clearly that our bomb is to protect ourselves alone: not NATO not Germany, and even less Poland. There is no common plan to counter a Soviet invasion of Poland, and thus one should not count it in the balance of forces between the two blocs. Secondly, we all say, you with greater confidence than I, that we must create other means of pressure than the threat of nuclear weapons as instruments of international politics, in order to have the strength to maintain our alliances, and to support oppressed peoples and so forth. So to sum up, better conventional forces than nuclear weapons, better non-military policy instruments that military ones. Now, the fact we did not even care to use the pipeline affair as a pressure point when we were confronted with the Polish tragedy seems to me to deflate the very policies we have proposed as alternative means of intervention to the use of the nuclear weapons.

# FRENCH MILITARY POLICY: AN INTERVIEW WITH DOMINIC MOISI*

## by Dick Howard and John Mason

MASON: What is the French nuclear doctrine and how has it evolved during the 25 years since de Gaulle first initiated the *force de frappe*?

MOISI: Well, the key is "independence." From the beginning de Gaulle thought of nuclear weapons as what would give France diplomatic independence in the short run and, in the long run, some kind of military independence, when the weapons being built would reach some credibility. The ultimate goal and the ultimate rationale of the weapons is that in a nuclear world one cannot fully rely on alliances. This is a world where selfishness is a direct product of nuclear weapons. This was translated by de

* This interview was conducted July 15, 1981 and broadcast over WBAI in New York City, August 10, 1981. This interview was discussed earlier in John Mason, "Introduction to Mary Kaldor and the English Peace Movement," in *Telos*, No. 51 (Spring 1982), pp. 80-87.

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Gaulle in his famous statement "who would sacrifice Washington to save Paris?" So, since the nature of international relations has been changed by this introduction of nuclear weapons, countries such as France were forced to obtain this type of weapon if they wanted to preserve their independence. And, in some way, de Gaulle inherited this predictament. During the Fourth Republic the need for nuclear weapons was being discussed in many diplomatic situations. It started during the debate over the European Defense Community, and was concluded at the time of the Suez Crisis, which greatly stimulated building that nuclear force. Therefore, when de Gaulle came to power, he really decided to proceed with something that had already been decided in the minds of most French politicans.

MASON: When we look at that doctrine, however, it involves more than simply the idea of independence. There is a specific French idea concerning how deterrence works, i.e., that a weaker party can dissaude a stronger one from undertaking certain actions. This is a policy presupposing that diplomatic strength can lie on the side of the militarily weaker party. In the U.S. today the mainstream debate about the question of nuclear weapons seems to focus on either accepting parity with the Soviet Union, or trying to re-establish nuclear superiority. The French view is that a small number of weapons can be as effective as a much larger force. This seems to be quite specific and quite original. Could you elaborate on how French theorists have dealt with that question over the past 25 years?

MOISI: Although that theory has evolved over the last 25 years, it is still based on the idea of proportional deterrence, which means that a relatively small country with an insignificant number of weapons can still deter a superpower because what it represents for that superpower in terms of strategic objectives is not as important as the level of causalties that country can inflict on the superpower. The relative price is too high...especially if you recall that beyond this balance of forces between the small power and the superpower, there is the relation between the superpowers themselves. The French view of deterrence presupposes that there is some kind of global balance between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. So, in some ways, it is a very refined, rather Machiavellian worldview. You want to be independent but you base that independence on a calculation of the balance of forces which includes the existence of another superpower confronting the first superpower. So, it is the relation between what I can inflict as a small power and the strategic stake that I represent for the great superpower that confronts me, given the broader context of the conflict between the two superpowers. Put simply, it means that the Soviet Union could probably not afford the kinds of losses which France could inflict, given the fact that, after France, there would be another superpower left intact, the U.S., while the Soviet Union's forces had been diminished.

HOWARD: Let me pick up on your reference to a Machiavellian strategy. After all, you remember Machiavelli also argues that one of the mistakes of the Italian city states was their reliance on mercenary soldiers. Now, you suggested that de Gaulle inherited something from the Fourth Republic, and you spoke as if there was an unanimity around this nuclear doctrine. In connecting Machiavelli and the idea of a civilian force as necessary for the defense of a country, there is a conflict with a nuclear doctrine that relies on outside elements. Could you elaborate on this unanimity? Why is there such a degree of consensus among French politicans? Or is there a difference between Left and Right on this issue?

MOISI: Foreigners find it admirable that, on the two most important issues of French foreign policy, there has been a consensus for the last 20 years, i.e., around the policy

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that France should have nuclear weapons and that France should remain outside of NATO. It is probably one of the greatest posthumous victories of de Gaulle that events have confirmed his original political choice. So far, the only country in which neutralism has not developed as a political force in the late 1970's or early 1980's is France, and one of the reasons one can give for that is that France has ultimately been a responsible country in terms of defense over the last 20 years, and it is very difficult to act responsibly if you have no responsibilities. France has had responsibilities as a way of conserving her own history, of feeling that she is still largely responsible for her own defense, and that in large part explains why we have not seen in France the development of such neutralist forces as one can see in Germany, or in Northern Europe, or even in England.

MASON: There seems to be a cold instrumental calculation at the heart of the Gaullist vision. When we listen to the rhetoric of e.g., the new Socialist government, when we listen to Cheysson, the emphasis we hear is not so much on this instrumental view, but more on the defense of ideological values, on the defense of a Western heritage, on the projection of France as not only a model for itself but a model for the world outside. There seems to be a quite striking change in tone. To what degree do you think that the French Socialist government represents a modification or a continuity with the Gaullist past? You have said there is this consensus, and yet there is this dramatic difference in tone.

MOISI: Well, there is both continuity and change. You are right in emphasizing the difference between the logic of the Cheysson speeches and the logic of de Gaulle. In the case of de Gaulle, the basis for his message was nationalism. But, in some ways, he was not very different in style from Mitterrand, except that the Mitterrand vision, or the Cheysson vision, has changed the principles. It is much closer to what Americas would call "Wilsonism," or "Carterism." The irony of our world is that, at the very moment when Carter's vision was rejected even by Carter himself, someone else in Europe has picked it up, and that someone is Mitterrand. The problem is to what extent can this logic resist reality. Now, the fact is that like de Gaulle, Mitterrand found the basis for his policy in French history. As you know, we have a very long and very complex history. It is like a huge market: we can pick anything we want out of this history. So, de Gaulle picked nationalism in the terms of Barres, or Peguy, and Mitterrand has found Socialism in the terms of Jaures, or in terms of a diplomatic approach toward the world — internationalism in terms of Briand.

HOWARD: You spoke a moment ago about France accepting "its responsibilities," and you spoke as if that only meant responsibility for its own self-defense. Yet, France certainly has also taken responsibility for the "defense" of other nations in Africa. In this, there has not been the same agreement on the way in which France "accepts its responsibilities." Is there then an agreement on nuclear policy, but a disagreement on other military policies? Of course, during the Fourth Republic, there were disputes about Algeria, Vietnam and so on. What is the relation now between nuclear versus conventional defense responsibilities?

MOISI: In terms of nuclear responsibilities, the French doctrine, as it has evolved in the last 15 years, has had two possible orientations: one was to stick to a rather "hexagonal" vision of the doctrine — France alone — and the national strategic umbrella above everything. This is the doctrine formulated by Ailleret in 1967 in his famous "All Points Strategy." It was also the logic of Michel Debray in 1972. There is another logic which was developed later on which was especially visible under Pompidou and Giscard — the logic of the "enlarged sanctuary." In this perspective, France's defense can-

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not be artificially isolated from the defense of Europe. We are, therefore, also responsible for what happens to Germany. This tendency emphasizes the role of tactical nuclear weapons as a compliment to strategic nuclear forces. Well, although it is really much too early to say specifically what the new French doctrine is going to be, the first declarations, and the Socialists' thinking, means that there might be a return to the first version of French nuclear doctrine, which means a more Gaullist, more hexagonal vision of things. This return would imply that the emphasis would return to the primacy of strategic nuclear weapons, and this is why the French government is now discussing adding two new nuclear, missile-launching submarines to the existing force of five nuclear submarines.

Now, when we switch from nuclear to conventional weapons, and if we speak specifically of the extra-territorial forces — forces that can be used in Africa, for example — we find that the French government is now caught between two contradictory positions: the first one is the need to be faithful to its treaty obligations: and we have signed a certain number of defense treaties with several African states. And if we were not to honor these treaties we would lose the reputation we have enjoyed so far. Now, the second thing is that the military approach to relations with Third World countries is clearly not the one favored by this Socialist government in opposition to what seems to be the predominant approach in the U.S. today. We believe that problems of development are mainly economic problems that should be solved by economic or political means. Still, at some point, there might be the need for a "political" intervention, and if this intervention can be inserted in the framework of the defense agreement -- if the country involved agrees, if that country's neighbors are also in agreement — then France might resort to force. These are the new conditions of the French conventional military doctrine. Of course, all these conditions are rather complex and may prove difficult to implement when a crisis occurs. But, if I wanted to describe the difference, I would have to say: "Well, we are ready to honor our old agreements, but we want to be much more cautious before doing so." The French in some ways are not ready to repeat the Kolwezi operation, even though the Americans seem ready to welcome it. Kolwezi in many ways was difficult to pull off in purely military terms. We nearly failed at Kolwezi and the military people have very clear, though rather dubious memories, of what could have happened there.

MASON: I wanted to return to the question of disarmament, and attitudes towards armament and disarmament. You said that what motivates the very different attitude of the French political community, and specifically the French Left, toward nuclear issues the existence of the *force de frappe*. Another important element in this is the attitude of the French Left toward the Soviet Union, which seems to have been going through a very dramatic evolution, and which seems quite different in character from the view of the Soviet society that one finds in the rest of Western Europe or at least on the Britain and the West German Left. We should discuss this evolution because, in terms of its politics, the Left seems to identify the Soviet Union as its principal adversary, and yet what you say in terms of strategy is that there is a return toward a vision of "France alone." There seems to be a contradiction here between the government and its intellectuals that could become quite problematic in the future.

MOISI: You are perfectly right. You have defined a problem that is going to be very interesting to watch over the next few years: the problem of the relation of the Left intellectuals to a Left government. This is the first such case in post-war French history. Now, on the specific problem of the Soviet Union, there has been a dramatic evolution. In the 1950's, in spite of everything, most French intellectuals were, if not par-

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tisans, at least were "understanding" towards the Soviet Union. To a great extent, the intelligentsia was pro-Soviet at the very moment during the Cold War when the government, which was radical and even socialist, was extremely anti-Soviet. Now in the 70's and 80's this kind of relation has changed. The intelligentsia — thanks to the Gulag and to Solzhenitsyn — has discovered "the true nature" of the totalitarian regime. Books like Bernard-Henri Lévy's have popularized this idea in broad sectors of French public opinion. But precisely at this point, when the Soviet Union was losing its intellectual battle with French intellectuals, the French government advocated a policy of progressive rapprochement with the Soviet Union. In the last several years things have changed. Of course, there has been the impact of the Afghan invasion and there is the question of Poland. Concerning the Soviet Union there is an agreement at this point between the intelligentsia and the Mitterrand government. Mitterrand himself, maybe because he knows the French Communist Party from inside has no illusions about the Soviet Union, unlike Giscard who may have had no feelings about ideology, and who approached the problem too rationally. Mitterrand is much more familar with ideology, he has a better understanding of the essential difference between the Soviet Union and Western Europe, and he also understands the nature of the balance of forces. Moreover, he knows politically that if he wants his domestic and economic programs accepted by the rest of the world — although it is completely different as an approach from that of, e.g., Germany or Great Britain — he has to be in conformity on foreign policy issues, especially on East-West questions. Beside this denunciation of the Soviet Union, the emphasis on the balance of forces at the military level is essential to continue normal relations with the U.S. given the fact that, on North-South issues, France is going to attack the U.S. for what it is doing in Latin America or in South Africa. So, this denunciation of the Soviet Union is natural to Mitterrand, but is also part of this global political approach.

MASON: You seem to be saying that Mitterrand is a better student of Machiavelli than Giscard because we must not forget that, beyond the popular image of Machiavelli as the instrumental politician, there was also Machiavelli the nationalist, the patriot, who wished to renew a certain kind of republicanism...

MOISI: Well, this comparison with Machiavelli is fun. All the more so, since, as maybe you already know, during the Fourth and the Fifth Republics, Mitterrand himself was called in French politics "The Florentine"...

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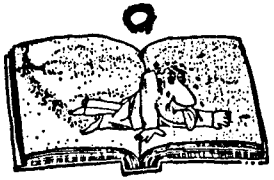

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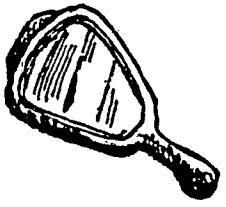

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